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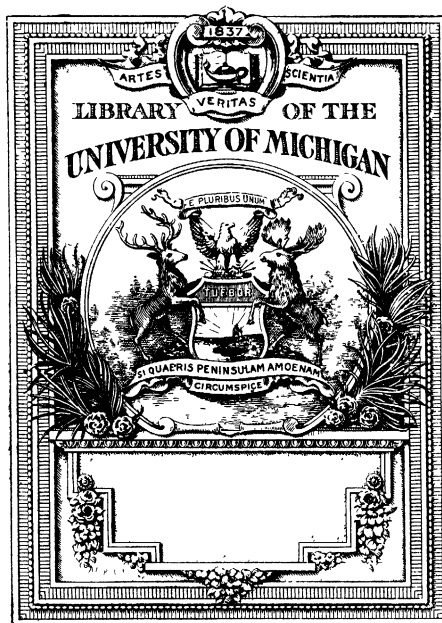
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1st edition 1861. This edition lacks the sketch of Swift, but contains those of Henry Flood, 1759-91, Henry Grattan, 1775-1820, and Daniel O'Connell, with fresh material from ms. sources. The essay on O'Connell, which forms the second volume of the work, is a masterly account of the political history of Ireland during the first half of the 19th century.

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W. DAWSON JOHNSTON, Feb. 1904

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LEADERS  
OF  
PUBLIC OPINION IN IRELAND

VOL. I.

HENRY FLOOD.      HENRY GRATTAN

WORKS BY THE  
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BY  
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## PREFACE

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THERE comes a period in the lives of most men who have attained any tolerable success in serious literature, when the desire to bring their earlier writings to the level of their later knowledge and into full harmony with their matured opinions, is perhaps stronger than their desire for fresh production. It is a feeling of this kind which has led me to enlarge, revise, and indeed in a great measure rewrite this book, which has been for many years out of print. Its history is a somewhat curious one. It was first published anonymously in 1861, when the author was just leaving the university. Public opinion on Irish history at that time hardly existed. Scarcely anything of real value on the subject had recently appeared, and my own little book showed only too clearly the crudity and exaggeration of a writer in his twenty-third year. At all events it fell absolutely dead. With the exception of Mr. O'Neill Daunt, who wrote a kindly review of it in a Cork newspaper, and who was good enough to predict for its author some future in literature, I do not know that it impressed anyone. Somewhere about thirty copies were sold, and a few years later, during my absence on the Continent, the publisher having failed, the remaining copies were disposed of, probably for waste-paper.

The subject, however, was one in which I took a

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deep interest, and in 1871, when another book had brought my name into notice, I carefully revised these biographies, adding a good deal of new information, excising some manifest exaggerations, and toning down a rhetoric which savoured too much of a debating society. With these changes I published it under my own name, and with an Introduction giving my views of the present condition and probable future of Irish affairs. The Irish question had at this time forced itself prominently on English opinion, and two measures of the first magnitude—the disestablishment and disendowment of the Irish Church and the Land Act of 1870—had been recently carried. The intensity and extent of disaffection in the country had become manifest to the English public. The Fenian outbreak of 1867 had indeed been speedily and easily suppressed, but the extreme violence of the rebel press and the election of the convict O'Donovan Rossa as member for Tipperary showed how widely the Fenian spirit had spread, while at the same time there was an alarming recrudescence of agrarian crime. The Queen's Speech of 1870 deplored it, and dwelt especially upon the 'remarkable and injurious' 'indisposition to give evidence in aid of the administration of justice.' It was stated in Parliament that in the first half of 1869 the number of agrarian outrages was double the number in the same half of 1868 and four times the number of 1866, and the Land Act of 1870 was accompanied by a Peace Preservation Act containing provisions of the most drastic character. The unsatisfactory state of Ireland was universally acknowledged, although at the close of 1870 some signs of appeasement appeared, which were attributed by one party to the Land Act and by another to the Peace Preservation Act. In large parts of Ireland, however, and especially in Westmeath and the

King's County, little or no improvement was discernible.

Side by side with the symptoms of Fenian disaffection and of agrarian crime, a Home Rule movement of a totally different character had arisen under the leadership of Isaac Butt. It was supported among others by some influential Protestants, who saw with reason in the disestablishment and disendowment of the Irish Church a violation of the fundamental article of the Union, and who believed that in the new condition of Irish affairs some form of local government had become advisable. The distinctive features of the modern Home Rule movement had, however, as yet not arisen. Butt was a thoroughly loyal subject of the Empire, and he would have abhorred the idea of allying his party with Fenians or dynamiters. He had no intention of making use of the Irish representation in the House of Commons for the purpose of dislocating parliamentary government in England, and when in his latter days the policy of systematic obstruction was adopted he emphatically repudiated it. He wrote with great knowledge and sagacity on the Irish land question, contending that the two main agrarian wants of Ireland were additional security for tenants' improvements, and such a measure of fixity of tenure as could be attained by the conversion of tenancies at will into long leases extending over some sixty years, and placing the relations of landlord and tenant on the basis of distinct written contract. He had never, however, the smallest sympathy with the school which afterwards made the agrarian and the Nationalist questions inseparable, preaching the abolition of landlordism, and making the hope of breaking contracts and sweeping away or greatly diminishing rents the main inducement by which they hoped to win the support of the farming

class. But a subordinate Parliament constructed on a federal basis, and dealing exclusively with Irish affairs, seemed to Butt imperatively necessary, and he believed that it might arrest or divert the disaffection which was so apparent in Ireland.

My own Introduction did not adopt this view, but it appeared to me that the existing disaffection was in no degree exaggerated. 'Disloyalty,' I wrote, 'is probably as extensive and is certainly as malignant as at the death of O'Connell, and in many respects the public opinion of Ireland has palpably deteriorated. O'Connell taught an attachment to the connection, a loyalty to the Crown, a respect for the rights of property, a consistency of Liberalism, which we look for in vain among his successors; and that faith in moral force and constitutional agitation which he made it one of his greatest objects to instil into the people has almost vanished.'

The material condition of Ireland had of late years incontestably improved and education had widely spread, but there were no signs that disloyalty was in consequence abating, while in some respects it might be plausibly contended that education had even intensified it. The chief reading of the great mass of the people had come to consist of a Fenian press and a cheap literature specially intended to excite their passions against England and the Empire. The Imperial Parliament, while legislating for the Irish people, wholly failed to enlist their sympathies or (at this time) even their interest; to prove a safety valve of their discontents; to allay, influence or direct the currents of national feeling. Public opinion, in a word, was profoundly diseased. 'The genuine national enthusiasm never flows in the channel of Imperial politics. With great multitudes sectarian considerations have entirely

superseded national ones, . . . while with another and still larger class, the prevailing spirit seems to be an indifference to all parliamentary proceedings, an utter scepticism about constitutional means of realising their ends, a blind, persistent hatred of England.'

The cause of this state of things was largely to be found in the past. Irish history I maintained, if less attractive than most histories to a merely dramatic historian, presents an interest of the highest order to those who chiefly seek in history 'the chain of causes and effects, the influence of past legislation not only upon the material condition, but also upon the character of a nation.' My own inference from it was that it was pre-eminently necessary that Irish government should be at once strong, just and national. Weak governments, the fluctuating policy which is almost inseparable from party government, and the habit of yielding to riot and outrage what in quiet times had been postponed or absolutely refused, had in Ireland been more than commonly fatal, and it was difficult to exaggerate the extent to which they had lowered the respect for law. But apart from specific grievances and complaints, a large part of the state of public opinion in Ireland was due to the profound difference in national type, character and interests that separates the Irish from the English people. The sentiment of nationality, whether it be wise or foolish, is too powerful an element in human affairs to be safely disregarded, and I believed that 'no Government will ever command the real affection and loyalty of the people which is not in some degree national, administered in a great measure by Irishmen and through Irish institutions . . . calling into being a strong local political feeling, directed by men who have the responsibility of property, who are attached to the connection and who

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at the same time possess the confidence of the Irish people . . . . To call into active political life the upper class of Irishmen and to enlarge the sphere of their political power, to give, in a word, to Ireland the greatest amount of self-government that is compatible with the unity and security of the Empire, should be the aim of every statesman.'

Butt had sought to attain this end by the immediate creation of a dependent Irish Parliament. This solution I emphatically repudiated. I argued that 'the very materials and essential conditions of self-government were still in a great measure wanting in Ireland;' that the attachment of the occupiers of the soil to their landlords, though certainly not extinct, had greatly diminished; that 'the schism of classes and the wild notions lately diffused on the subject of landed property constituted a serious danger.' 'One of the first acts of an Irish Parliament,' I contended, 'would probably be to build up a wall of separation between Protestants and Catholics by the destruction of united education;' and although the overwhelming 'motives of interest that connect Ireland with England are sufficient to secure the co-operation of the two countries as long as Irish opinion is directed by property and intelligence,' they were not likely to have much weight if the direction of Irish affairs fell into the hands of unprincipled adventurers, or of ignorant and unreasoning disloyalty. Under such circumstances any sudden or organic change should be deprecated, and 'it is only by slow, cautious and gradual steps that self-government can be in some degree restored. By opposing the tendency to centralisation, by transferring private business from the overworked Parliament of the Empire to cheaper and perhaps more competent local tribunals, by gradually enlarging the sphere of local government

and thus bringing into activity the political talent of the country, a sound public opinion may be slowly formed.' In several respects, as I proceeded to show, local administration in Ireland had proved eminently successful. The scandals connected with juries might be greatly mitigated by the adoption of the Scotch system under which unanimity was not required. The disestablishment and disendowment of the Church seemed to me likely to produce little good, as no provision was made for the payment of the priests, but 'the establishment of perfect religious equality and the settlement of the question of the temporal power of the Pope,' which had long been a burning question in Irish politics, at least removed two great causes of irritation. The skill and moderation with which in the Church Synod the Irish gentry were managing their Church affairs in the difficult moments that followed disestablishment was a good omen for the future, and there was reason to hope that under the influences of united education, of the secularising intellectual tendencies of the age, and of increasing wealth and knowledge, an independent lay public opinion would grow up among the Catholics, and the whole complexion of Irish politics would become less sectarian and less sacerdotal. 'The division between rich and poor was rapidly ceasing to coincide with that between Protestant and Catholic, and thus the old lines of demarcation were being gradually effaced.' The division of classes seemed to me now a graver danger than the division of sects, but I had great hope that the Land Bill of 1870, giving increased security to Irish tenants, would gradually tend to appease it, and I certainly did not foresee that its author would, eleven years later, introduce another measure based on essentially different principles, which has enormously aggravated the antagonism between the

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owners and occupiers of the soil, and thrown the agrarian condition of Ireland into an almost hopeless chaos.

Looking back after more than thirty years, I cannot but recognise that my forecast in 1871 has been in some respects lamentably falsified. The close alliance which has been established between Fenianism and Home Rule which in the days of Butt were altogether distinct, and the success of Parnell and Davitt in combining with them a great agrarian movement aiming at the destruction of landlordism, appealing habitually to the predatory instincts of the farming classes, and relying for its support on American subsidies and on a gigantic system of boycotting and intimidation at home, have totally changed the aspect of Irish politics. The principles of the Land League were not derived from Butt or O'Connell, but from Lalor and Mitchel, and it succeeded in capturing almost the entire political representation of three provinces of Ireland, and placing it in the hands of avowed enemies of the Empire. Local government which I desired has indeed been established, and I have myself supported it in Parliament; but it is certainly not a local government generally directed either by the loyal or the propertied classes, and it is still, in my opinion, too early to determine the character of its ultimate working. But the danger of an independent or even of a subordinate Parliament, which seemed to me so great in 1871, has become incomparably greater since the direction of Irish politics has passed into the hands of men who have proved during a long succession of years their disloyalty to the Crown, their hatred of the Empire, their habitual sympathy with its enemies, their total disregard for the conditions on which all individual liberty and all security of property must rest. The report of the Special Commission on the Parnell case has furnished

an imperishable and most authentic record of the history of this movement, its principles, its methods and its aims, and the speeches of its leaders both within and without Parliament, as well as the newspapers that represent their views, leave no doubt of its present character. What form the future government of Ireland may take if landed property passes wholly or mainly into the hands of a peasant proprietary I do not venture to predict; but Ireland has still to learn that no nation ever built up an enduring fabric of national independence on the basis of social disorganisation, systematic repudiation of contracts, systematic oppression and intimidation of quiet, industrious, law-abiding men.

Though I cannot say that the edition of this book which appeared in 1871 was, like its predecessors, absolutely neglected, it certainly made no considerable impression, and though there was a small and steady sale, it lagged far behind my other books, when the conversion of Mr. Gladstone to Home Rule took place and gave it a sudden and most unexpected popularity. Mr. Gladstone in several of his speeches and writings appealed to it as a justification of his policy, and his example was followed by three or four other conspicuous members of his Government. Some use might no doubt have been plausibly made of my strong persuasion that a distinct national feeling lay at the base of much Irish discontent, but it was surely somewhat extravagant to argue that a writer who condemned the Union in 1800 was necessarily favourable to its repeal eighty years later, and that there was any real analogy between a Parliament representing in the highest degree the loyalty, the property, and especially the landed property of Ireland, and an ultra-democratic and Land League Parliament which was certain to be guided by



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men who had long made it their task to stimulate in every form the most passionate hatred of the British Empire, and who would probably begin their legislative career by the plunder of the very classes of which Grattan's Parliament mainly consisted. That such an apprehension was not unreasonable was clearly shown by the fact that Mr. Gladstone, when introducing his Home Rule scheme, thought it advisable to couple with it a Bill for buying up at an enormous sum the land of Ireland in order that the Parliament which he intended to create should be unable to confiscate the property of its owners. Analogies however which serve an immediate party purpose are not very closely examined. In political pamphlets and newspapers, on platforms and even in Parliament, this book was often cited. Even the first still-born edition had a strange resurrection. I remember that on one occasion Mr. Justin McCarthy, in describing the growth of the Home Rule idea, gave a conspicuous place to the influence of my book when it first appeared, and Mr. Gladstone, while praising greatly the existing edition, urged those who could procure it to specially study the earlier and more authoritative one. Some of the worst specimens of its boyish rhetoric were, indeed, frequently quoted—usually without the smallest intimation that they had been suppressed by the author in his later edition.

With such admirable advertisements it is not surprising that the remaining copies of my book were speedily sold, and I did not reprint it, though it is a pure fiction to say that I had taken any active measures to suppress it. I was of course not insensible to the fact that the conditions in Ireland had profoundly changed since it was written, and that some portions of its Introduction were no longer applicable; but considerations of a wholly different nature made me desirous

that it should no longer be printed in its existing form. It represented, I venture to think, with much fidelity what was known on the subject in print, but it was written without an examination of the great manuscript collections of confidential Government correspondence that exist in London and Dublin. This exploration had now begun. Mr. Froude, in his 'England in Ireland,' had led the way, and I had myself undertaken a 'History of Ireland in the Eighteenth Century,' which was largely based on these materials, and which dealt with the same period as a considerable part of this book. It was impossible that such an investigation should not in some respects modify earlier judgments. In the case of Flood correspondence was brought to light which may materially influence the estimate of his career. The character and policy of Grattan remain, I think, entirely unaffected by the disclosures of the State Paper Office, but a stream of new light has been thrown on the treatment of the Catholic question during his time, and on the respective views of the Governments of England and Ireland. On these subjects I was writing with great fulness of detail and with abundant references to my authorities, and I naturally did not wish my biographies of Flood and Grattan to be re-issued to the public with no recognition of this new knowledge. The sketch of O'Connell dealt with a period which was not covered by my History, and I had always intended to reprint it. Other and more pressing work lay before me, and I do not regret the delay, for it has enabled me to make use of much new material. Two large volumes of his correspondence have been published by Mr. Fitzpatrick. Miss Cusack has collected many of his speeches and letters, which were either unedited or difficult to procure. Sir Charles Gavan Duffy, in a series of important works,

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has described on the best authority the relations of O'Connell with the Young Ireland party, and the Greville Memoirs and several other volumes of biography or correspondence have thrown new side-lights on his history.

It will be observed by those who compare this edition with its predecessors that the sketch of Swift, which in the earlier editions began the book, has disappeared. It will be found in an enlarged, and I hope much improved, form as the biographical introduction to the new and popular edition of Swift's Works, published by Messrs. Bell and edited by Mr. Temple Scott. I have replaced it by a short introductory sketch of the earlier phases of Irish history since the Revolution. Some passages in Grattan's life, and especially the Fitzwilliam controversy, have been much discussed within the last few years, and Lord Rosebery in his brilliant monograph on Pitt, and Lord Ashbourne in his charming and instructive volume on 'Some Chapters of Pitt's Life,' have stated with great fulness and force the case against Lord Fitzwilliam, and (which is not quite the same thing) the defence of Pitt's conduct in relation to him. They have not convinced me, and I have endeavoured to meet the points that they have raised; but the reader has at least now the opportunity of comparing full statements of both sides.

I have only to add that I have not thought it necessary to overload my pages with references to my authorities when those references are already fully given in my 'History of Ireland.' I have for the most part confined them to cases in which new facts have been adduced and to portions of history which had not been dealt with in my longer work.

*February 1903.*

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## INTRODUCTION

AMONG the satires of Swift there is none more savage than the *Legion Club*, in which he describes the Irish House of Commons as 'a den of thieves':

'Scarce a bowshot from the college,  
Half the world from sense and knowledge,'

and expresses his earnest hope that a legislature so corrupt and so tyrannical might one day be extirpated from the island. It is all the more remarkable because Swift had a few years before, in his famous fourth *Drapier's* letter, taken up the doctrine of Molyneux that the King, Lords, and Commons of Ireland had by right the sole power of legislating for Ireland, and that the powers exercised in Ireland by the English Parliament and by the English Privy Council were essentially an usurpation. The immediate cause of this invective of Swift was a resolution passed by the House of Commons in 1735 exempting from payment of tithes pasture land, and thus seriously injuring the interests of his Church. Although the resolutions of one House had no force of law, the effect of this resolution was to establish during the whole duration of the Irish Parliament in the payment of tithes a distinction between arable and pasture land, and an exemption in favor of the richest class of farmers.

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This was one of the rare instances in the first half of the eighteenth century in which the Irish Parliament asserted clearly its independent will. It was in truth a body so powerless and so subservient that, although a few signs of an independent spirit were occasionally shown, its proceedings present during this period very few features of any interest. It enacted, with scarcely a division, the penal laws which reduced the Irish Catholics to absolute impotence. It was compelled to acquiesce, though not without some remonstrance, in the long series of commercial disabilities which destroyed all Irish commerce and almost all Irish manufactures, but it passed a good deal of useful legislation about roads and harbours and public works and nascent industries, and it showed a decided will of its own on questions relating to Irish finance.

One of the results of the repeated confiscations that had taken place in Ireland was that the Crown possessed a large Irish hereditary revenue, which in the middle of the eighteenth century amounted to nearly 450,000*l.* a year, independent of Parliamentary control. It was treated by the Crown as a kind of Privy Purse, and it provided among other things for a large pension list, which was bestowed in a manner that would never have been tolerated in England. The mistresses, the bastards, and some of the foreign relations of several successive sovereigns were thus provided for, as well as many persons who had rendered services—sometimes of a very dubious character—wholly unconnected with Ireland. Under the Stuarts the hereditary revenue had been found sufficient for the government of the country, and for a long period no Parliament met in Ireland. It was only when the expenses of the Revolution made this revenue insufficient, that the custom began of summoning Parliament

every second year for the purpose of voting additional supplies, and it soon appeared evident that the Commons desired to exercise over those supplies the same powers that were exercised by the English House of Commons over English finance. It regarded these duties as entirely its own grant, and insisted that Bills of Supply should originate in the Irish House of Commons, that they should not, as was the custom, be sent over to them for ratification from England, and that when they had received the assent of the House of Commons they should not be altered by the Privy Council.

In 1692, when the first Irish Parliament after the Revolution was summoned, a violent quarrel arose which was the precursor of many similar disputes. Two Bills of Supply were transmitted to Ireland as a cause for summoning the Parliament. The Commons passed one on account of pressing emergencies, but accompanied it with a resolution declaring that this was not to be considered a precedent. It rejected the other because it had not taken its rise in that House. At a later period there were protests which were not wholly ineffectual against the growth of the Pension List and against some of its most scandalous items. There was an attempt to check one of the worst forms of Irish maladministration by the imposition of a tax of 4*d.* in the pound upon salaries and pensions of habitual absentees, but it was almost wholly ineffectual, as the Crown retained the right of exempting them by sign manual. Both Houses of Parliament supported Swift in his protest against Wood's halfpence, and a few years later a vote of the House of Commons defeated a design of the Government to place the supplies which had been voted for the payment of the principal and interest of the National Debt beyond its control. Some serious embezzlements in the erection of barracks

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were pointed out and punished. There was a law for encouraging tillage by providing that five out of every hundred acres should be under the plough; but it was more than counteracted by the resolution to which I have already referred, exempting pasture land from the payment of tithes.

Acts were carried for building churches; for establishing foundling hospitals and workhouses in Dublin and Cork; for naturalizing foreign Protestants who brought new industries and a higher standard of civilisation into Ireland; for settling such Protestants in different parts of Ireland; for making the affirmation of Quakers equivalent to an oath; for making roads and harbours, and stimulating different forms of industry by bounties. Large political questions scarcely ever appeared on the parliamentary scene, and there was little or no serious party and political division.

The Union between England and Scotland took place in 1707, and it was accompanied by the establishment of free trade between the two countries. In the work of Molyneux, which was published in 1698, and which was the great text-book of the advocates of the legislative independence of Ireland, there is a significant passage showing how gladly a similar union with free trade would have been accepted as an alternative. The author mentions that under Edward III. Irish members were summoned to a Parliament in England, and he adds that if it may be inferred from this fact that the Parliament of England might bind Ireland, it must also be allowed that the people of Ireland ought to have representatives in the Parliament of England, 'and this,' adds Molyneux, 'I believe we should be willing enough to embrace; but this is a happiness we can hardly hope for.'

The possibility of a legislative union with England

~~which would give Ireland the great benefit of free trade~~ was at this time present to many minds, and the discussions which led to the Scotch Union naturally strengthened it. In 1703, four years before the Scotch Union, both Houses of the Irish Parliament concurred in a representation to the Queen in favour of such a measure, and in 1707 the House of Commons, in an address congratulating the Queen on the accomplishment of the Scotch Union, added, 'May God put it into your royal heart to add greater strength and lustre to your crown by a yet more comprehensive union.' There is much evidence that about this time the ablest men in Ireland ardently desired a legislative union as the best means of securing the prosperity of Ireland without interfering with that of England. Such a measure, accompanied by freedom of trade and manufactures, would probably have then encountered no opposition in Ireland; it would have been welcomed by men of all classes and creeds, and it is difficult to exaggerate the difference it might have made, both in her political and industrial history. It was the spirit of trade monopoly which then prevailed in England that made it impossible. The great opportunity was lost. The English ministers refused to listen to the overtures of the Irish Parliament, and they preferred the alternative of governing Ireland through a completely subservient legislature.

It has been noticed that the most severe of the penal laws against the Catholics immediately followed the rejection of the overtures for an union. Such a measure would have consolidated the Protestant interest, and secured the whole weight of English influence in favour of the existing disposition of power and property. The Irish Protestants now perceived that they must rely mainly if not solely on themselves to secure

their lives, their property, and their power from the conquered majority. The depression of the Catholics became still more decidedly the object of their policy, and this policy combined with the commercial disabilities to drive the most energetic Irishmen to other lands, and to sink the great mass of the people into poverty and impotence.

The Protestant interest, though it held ostensibly a complete monopoly of power and wealth, was in truth by no means flourishing. Nearly all the more important and lucrative places in Church and State were given to Englishmen, and this patronage—especially the portion relating to the Church—was scandalously abused. Very many of the great lay officials and even of the bishops of the Church were habitual absentees, and the best posts in Ireland were made the reward of purely English services. A large proportion of the great landlords were also absentees. They had acquired vast tracts of confiscated land exclusively occupied by Irish-speaking Catholics utterly differing in ideas and tendencies from those in which the new landlords had been brought up. Not unnaturally under these circumstances the object of a Protestant and probably English landlord was to transfer the management of these properties to another. The social influence attaching to a great landowner was delegated to a man of a lower class. A large tenant, who must by law be a Protestant, was given a very long lease over the whole estate at a rent which was usually moderate at the time when the lease was given, and which long before the expiry of the seventy or eighty years during which it had to run became absurdly low. From this great middleman the real owner derived a small but secure revenue, and this was in numerous cases his only connection with the soil. Unfortunately the immediate

tenant rarely cultivated it himself; the system of subletting to small farmers was found to be so profitable that it soon became general, and as population increased and the demand for land grew it was carried out to a ruinous extent.

The greatest of all discouragements to the Protestant interest was to be found in the commercial disabilities which destroyed the chief articles of Irish industry. This policy had begun under the later Stuarts when, to prevent Irish competition in the English market, the export from Ireland to England of cattle, sheep, and swine, of beef, pork, bacon, mutton, butter, and cheese was forbidden, and when under an 'amended' Navigation Act Ireland was excluded, at first partially and then altogether, from all direct trade with the English colonies. She was thus deprived of the chief benefit she might have derived from the excellent pasture land and the excellent harbours which were the two great advantages nature had bestowed on her. After the Revolution the commercial classes acquired a greatly increased strength, and the result was the total destruction of the Irish woollen trade. The laws prohibiting the export of cattle had led the proprietors in Ireland to lay out their land in sheep walks, and the unusual excellence of Irish wool and the cheapness of Irish labour had laid the foundation of an important manufacture, which was carried on mainly by Protestants. Many English, Scotch, and even foreign manufacturers came over to take part in it. There was every prospect that this manufacture would attain considerable magnitude, and as it was certain for many years to be mainly Protestant, it would have greatly strengthened the Protestant interest in Ireland. Unfortunately there was an important woollen manufacture in England, and it soon took the alarm. Irish




woollen manufactures were already excluded by prohibitory duties from the English market, and the Irish were now forbidden to send their manufactured wool not only to the English colonies, but also to any foreign country, or their raw wool to any country except England, where it might be useful for the English manufacturer. The rising industry was thus absolutely blasted. Nothing but the small home market remained. A great portion of the most industrious and enterprising population in Ireland fled from the country, and a fatal discouragement fell on those who remained. It was clearly shown by this and by several other minor enactments that it was the wish, and that it was within the power, of the English Parliament to crush any Irish industry that could possibly compete with an English one. There were, it is true, some slight and intermittent efforts made to foster the linen trade as a compensation, by admitting some branches of it to the English market and even encouraging it by bounties, but this was wholly insufficient to counteract the evil that had been done.

The commercial policy of England was not an isolated thing, for the subordination of the interests of dependencies to the interests of the dominant country would then have been accepted as a general maxim throughout Europe, and was practised by every maritime power with such possessions. But its effects in Ireland were peculiarly disastrous. It not only immensely aggravated the deplorable poverty of the country, but it had a permanent influence of the most far-reaching kind. It broke down the Protestant interest and the industrial spirit which it should have been the first object of England to support. It tended to throw the whole population for subsistence on the soil, and thus gave agrarian disturbances the peculiarly bitter

and persistent character they have ever assumed, and it called into being a vast smuggling trade in Irish wool exported to the Continent which was one of the most powerful means of educating the people into hostility to the law.

It must be added that the evil was much aggravated by the hostility that subsisted between the Scotch Presbyterians who were so powerful in the North and the dominant and established Episcopalian Protestant Church. The Presbyterians, it is true, were not like the Catholics excluded by law from the Parliament, and from the times of Charles II. their ministers had even a small endowment from English funds, which in the eighteenth century was considerably augmented, but their political power bore no proportion to their number, their energy, or their wealth. In the House of Lords they were absolutely, or almost absolutely, unrepresented, and the absenteeism of great numbers of the lay lords had given the bishops an overwhelming power. In the House of Commons there was a group of Presbyterian members, but it was very small. Presbyterians were extremely rare among the landed gentry, and a Test Act was in force which excluded them from town corporations. This most unfortunate Act had a curious history. It was tacked by a Tory English Government in 1704 to an Irish Bill against Popery, and according to the Irish Constitution, the only alternative of the Irish Parliament was to accept this clause which it had not asked for, or to reject the Bill as a whole. It was then in a strongly anti-popery mood and it adopted the former alternative. Soon after, Whig Governments became supreme in England, and they would have gladly abolished the test in Ireland, but they found it impossible to induce the Irish Parliament to adopt such a measure. Swift had written

powerfully against the repeal ; the bishops commanded a majority in the House of Lords, and the Northern Presbyterians, who were in close touch with their brethren in Scotland, were very far from being themselves a tolerant or conciliatory body. The English Toleration Act of William was not extended to Ireland, and it was accompanied by limitations and restrictions which the Irish Presbyterians scornfully repudiated, but in 1719 they obtained a larger Toleration Act like that in Scotland. There were still several restrictions which were only gradually removed, and it was not till the latter half of the eighteenth century that the Presbyterians obtained a release from all real grievances. This relief, however, did not produce any complete harmony of sects. The Episcopalian and the Presbyterian elements still remained separate, jealous, and hostile, and both at the time of the War of the American Revolution and in the early days of the French Revolution, Presbyterian disaffection was one of the most serious dangers to the government of Ireland.

 While Protestantism was thus weakened and divided the Catholics were crushed by the penal laws. In judging these laws large allowance must be made, not only for the intolerance of religious dissent which at the end of the seventeenth and in the beginning of the eighteenth century was the prevailing spirit in nearly all European legislation, but also for the very peculiar circumstances of Ireland. A long succession of savage civil wars had aroused the fiercest passions, and they had been accompanied or followed by gigantic confiscations of land. Most of the landed property in Ireland was held under a recent Act of Settlement which was based on confiscation, which had been repealed by the Jacobite Parliament of 1689 in the short period of its ascendancy, and which would no doubt have been again

overthrown if the Catholic party regained their power. Under such circumstances it was inevitable that some disabling, disarming, and incapacitating laws against the Catholics should have been carried by the Protestant Parliament, though it is no less certain that the provisions of the penal code went far beyond what was needed; that many of them tended powerfully to degrade and demoralize, and that a large proportion of the code was a distinct violation of the arrangement which had been come to by the leaders of the two parties at the time of the surrender of Limerick, and to which the English Government was distinctly pledged. The Irish legislation against Catholics greatly resembled and was probably largely influenced by the French laws against the Huguenots, and on the whole the Irish legislation was less stringently enforced. Certainly as far as the part of the code directed against religion was concerned, this was the case. In France many hundreds of Protestants were sent to the galleys for no other crime than attending a Protestant service, and not a few Protestant ministers were hanged. In Ireland the public worship of the Catholics was proscribed by law. The priests were often hunted from their parishes and sometimes imprisoned or sent out of the country, and in times of apprehended danger orders were given to enforce laws that were otherwise almost obsolete.

The object of the Legislature was, no doubt, to make Ireland eventually a Protestant country, but the days had gone by when, as in the decades that followed the Reformation, whole nations changed their creed in obedience to the civil power, and there was nothing of the steady persecuting spirit which in the sixteenth century crushed resistance. During about thirty years the celebration of the Catholic worship was carried on under great difficulties. Priests, it is true, were regis-

tered and had a right of celebrating it in their own parishes, but the liberty they enjoyed was much limited not only by a crowd of humiliating restrictions, but also by the direction that they must take an oath of abjuration of the Stuarts, which their superiors condemned. Much worship seems to have been conducted either by unregistered priests or by priests who had not taken the oath of abjuration, and Catholic bishops and other dignitaries incurred great danger in coming to Ireland. They, as well as all monks or friars, were liable to be first imprisoned and then banished, and if they returned after banishment to be put to death, and considerable rewards were offered for their detection and conviction. At the same time the worship did go on; attempts to suppress it were rare, partial, and intermittent, and long before the laws against Catholic worship were repealed they had become a dead letter. But the effect of those laws was to deprive law in Ireland of all moral sanction by bringing it into direct conflict with religion. The religious teachers were an illegal class, liable to banishment, and in some cases if they returned from banishment to death, and although the code was never enforced to the extreme penalty, it was quite sufficient to prevent any orderly ecclesiastical government in the Catholic Church, and to place religious teaching in the hands of an ignorant, fanatical, and lawless priesthood. Catholicism was not extirpated or seriously diminished, and after the first twenty-five or thirty years of the century it was as a form of worship practically unmolested. But it was degraded in its character, and it became far more dangerous to the peace of the country than if it had been fully recognised.

The laws against property, however, were in a great degree automatic and they worked with terrible effect.

One of their most serious effects was that nearly all Catholics of ability and energy abandoned either their country or their faith. A considerable number whose convictions were not strong conformed to the Established creed. The eldest son of a Catholic landlord thus kept his family property together. If he did not do so his estate was divided equally between himself and his brothers. The whole profession of the law was closed to Catholics, and very many conformed in order to practise it, or to escape a crowd of irritating, oppressive, and for the most part very useless restrictions which followed them into nearly every department of industrial life. There were laws preventing a dying Catholic parent from leaving to a Catholic the guardianship of his child; freeing the wife or child of a Catholic who conformed to Protestantism from the control of the husband or father, and giving them special rights in his property; making it highly penal for any Protestant to marry a Catholic, and annulling all such marriages if celebrated by a Catholic priest; securing an annuity to any priest who abandoned his faith; encouraging informers by rewards; limiting the number of apprentices a Catholic manufacturer might have; excluding Catholics from Limerick and Galway, from town corporations and from vestries; obliging them to pay a special tax called quarterage for pursuing their industries in towns, to pay double to the militia, to reimburse in case of war with a Catholic Power the damage done by the enemies' privateers. An absurd and insulting law, which also existed in England, forbade a Catholic to have a horse worth more than 5*l.*, and enabled a Protestant by tendering 5*l.* to seize his horse.

Most of these laws created a resentment utterly out of proportion to any good result they could possibly

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produce. They offered an unprincipled Catholic many bribes for conformity, and they gave both a lax Catholic and a dishonest Protestant numerous opportunities for fraud. Very naturally the conforming Catholics lost their influence over their co-religionists, while the best and most energetic members of the creed emigrated to the Continent, filled the armies of France, Spain, and Austria, and not unfrequently rose to high positions in the civil services of those countries. If the position of an educated Catholic at home was not intolerable, it was because law was systematically violated or evaded. But in spite of all evasion the lines of division both in creed and class were extremely deep, and above all deep in landed property. The belief which was general in the eighteenth century that political power should be mainly in the hands of the possessors of landed property was naturally peculiarly strong in Ireland, and while one branch of the code caused the small portion of the land which was in Catholic hands to crumble into small parts or to pass to the conforming heir, another part prevented the Catholics from buying land, or inheriting it from Protestants, or acquiring land tenures that were nearly equivalent to ownership. They could not hold a lease for more than thirty-one years, or any lease under which the profits of the land exceeded one-third of the rent. Any Catholic leaseholder who by his skill or industry made his profits exceed this proportion was liable to forfeit his farm to any Protestant who made the discovery. It would be difficult to conceive a provision better calculated to discourage industry or to encourage systematic evasion of the law. Education could only be legally obtained through Protestant sources. The popish schoolmaster was especially regarded with suspicion, and many such men were imprisoned or banished, and, by a refinement

of tyranny, Catholics were forbidden to have private tutors of their own creed or to send their children to be educated abroad. The term 'common enemy' was frequently applied in official documents to the great majority of the Irish people, and industrious habits among them were steadily discouraged by laws which deprived them of nearly all opportunities of education and wealth.

This was not a persecution like that which extirpated, by the death of fire, Protestantism and Judaism from Spain, nor was it enforced in the same stringent severity with which all Protestant worship was forbidden and suppressed in other Catholic countries of Europe and America. But looked at in its social and political aspects it had effects more disastrous than many very sanguinary persecutions. If it had turned Ireland into a Protestant country it would have at least raised it in the scale of civilisation, but, failing in this, it degraded both a creed and a nation. The full evil was not felt till later times, but it was then clearly seen how irreparable it had been. The great mass of the Irish Catholics had been at a very low stage of civilisation at the time of the Revolution, and the circumstances of their history had been very unfavourable, but the penal laws effectually barred their natural progress. Those who ought to have been their leaders and guides were either driven from the country or degraded by an insincere conformity to the prevailing creed. An essentially vicious social type was created in which the divisions between rich and poor, between landlord and tenant, between governor and governed in every grade coincided with a difference of religion, and which directly tended to strengthen and perpetuate the memories and traditions of race hostility. Education, and especially education in the practical work of an agri-



culturist's or trader's life, was what was most needed if the people were to be drilled into a sober, law-abiding, civilised community. The English sovereigns of the time of the Reformation had been fully conscious of this, and they had provided a system of education in Ireland which, if the Irish had accepted the English rule and the English creed might have completely transformed the country. Henry VIII. had enacted that every clergyman should take an oath when instituted to a benefice in Ireland that he would keep within his parish an English-speaking school, providing 'such convenient stipend or salary as in the same land accustomedly used to be taken.'<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth ordered the establishment of a free school under an English teacher in every diocese. She vested the nomination of schoolmasters in the bishop or in some cases in the lord deputy; she enacted that a third of the salary should be provided by the Ordinary and the other two-thirds by the clergy of the diocese, and the language of the Statute clearly shows that this was intended not for a mere English settlement but to put an end to the deplorable and barbarous ignorance of the Irish people.<sup>2</sup> But all this educational machinery failed to reach those for whom it was intended. The vast mass of the people remained Catholic and un-English. The funds that were provided were shamefully wasted or misapplied, and it was quite evident that education in a Catholic country could not be left, as it was chiefly left in England, to a Protestant Established Church. Some distinguished Irishmen recognised this, and in the course of the century several Irish landlords laboured seriously, and not without result, to raise the standard of knowledge around them.

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<sup>1</sup> 28 Henry VIII., c. 15.

<sup>2</sup> 12 Elizabeth, c. 1.

If the Irish Parliament had taken this question earnestly and efficiently in hand; if it had made it its first object to give the Catholics a sound, practical, purely secular education, excluding on the one hand all proselytism and on the other all priestly interference, it would have left a blessed memory behind it. Scotland was once quite as destitute of the best qualities of civilisation as Ireland, and it is to the Scotch schools that the regeneration of Scotland is mainly due. But the Irish Parliament not only neglected its duty. It closed the door against every kind of education the Catholics would accept. A system of education called Charter schools, indeed, was set up by Primate Boulter, with the object of giving at the public expense a sound and essentially industrial and agricultural education to the Irish poor. If such a scheme had been carried out on a large scale honestly and efficiently, and without the admixture of a sectarian element, it would have been a priceless benefit to Ireland. It would probably have done more good than any political measure that could have been devised. Unfortunately, however, it was part of the scheme that the pupils in the Charter schools should be brought up as Protestants. The schools were looked on in consequence with abhorrence by those who needed them most, and although they were largely and even lavishly subsidised, and through a long succession of years constantly recommended by the Lord Lieutenant, they were practically useless, and were suffered to fall into abuses that were conspicuous even in the dreary history of Irish jobbery and mal-administration. Military discipline, which serves some of the purposes of education, and of which the Irish have always been very evidently susceptible, was forbidden them by their exclusion from the army. Nearly all the incentives to ambition were withheld, and every

field of Irish life was thickly sown with disqualifications or monopolies. Agriculture was necessarily the main industry of the people, but they were excluded from its great prizes. In commercial and industrial life Irish Catholics often made considerable fortunes, but they were not allowed to invest their savings in mortgages on land, and this fact greatly limited the sums that should have been expended in agricultural improvement.

But deeper and more far-reaching than any mere material evil was the effect of the penal laws upon the character of the people. Unlike the other great persecutions in history, they were directed not against a dissentient minority, but against the vast majority of the nation. There were, indeed, two distinct nations in Ireland, differing in race, in creed, and in a great degree in language, opposed to each other in interests, sympathies, and traditions, and the penal laws tended powerfully at once to make this difference indelible, and to give the smaller nation the vices of monopolists and the larger nation the vices of slaves. The Catholics emerged from them, it is true, with many virtues. There was an unusually high standard of domestic purity—there was an intense fervour of religious belief—there was a truly admirable spirit of content and resignation in extreme poverty as well as amid the inevitable calamities of life, and there was much and beautiful mutual charity among the poor. But if the domestic and the religious virtues were prominent in the national type, no people in Europe were more destitute of the political and the industrial ones. The law-abiding spirit; the respect for authority; the spirit of compromise; the self-abnegation of a really genuine patriotism; the high standard of honesty and truthfulness, seriousness and integrity in politics, which is the

first condition of sound and healthy self-government, were utterly wanting, and the industrial qualities that lead to wealth and diffused comfort were scarcely less so. Those are equally uncandid who deny the profound degradation of the Irish character, and disregard the causes to which that degradation may be largely attributed.

I have elsewhere examined in detail the manner in which the penal laws were enforced. In a slight sketch like this I must confine myself to a few general remarks. There is an extreme and most remarkable difference between different periods of eighteenth century history in this respect. The enactments of the Irish Parliament in the first quarter of the century display a fierce and savage intolerance and an intense desire to crush the Catholic population to the dust. In the second quarter of the century this spirit had almost disappeared, and constant infractions of the penal code were permitted with general connivance. In some cases, landed properties of Catholics that would have otherwise been divided were held together under the names of Protestants, and although this trust had no sanction beyond that of honour, it was never, or scarcely ever, abused. Protestants, at the request of a Catholic parent, undertook the legal guardianship of Catholic children on the understanding that their education should be left in the hands of a Catholic relative. The professions were full of nominal conformists, who in their private lives practised their old religion without molestation. The worship of the Catholics was celebrated without pomp, but without hindrance. Catholic 'Hedge Schools' became numerous, and there were complaints that Protestants assisted Catholics in retaining arms. Much must, no doubt, be attributed to the impossibility of enforcing the code in the midst of a

population in which the vast majority were Catholics, but it is also clear that magistrates in general discouraged informers; and in the latter part of the century Protestants in Ireland showed themselves more liberal than Protestants in England in their dealings with Catholics.

Pure religious fanaticism does not, indeed, appear to have ever played a dominant part in this legislation. The object of the penal laws even in the worst period was much less to produce a change of religion than to secure property and power by reducing to complete impotence those who had formerly possessed them, and who might by a turn of the political wheel regain them. The passion that mixed with this legislation was much less the passion of genuine religious enthusiasm than the hatred produced by a long period of savage civil war. The predominant fear of the Irish Parliament in the first years of the century was that property under the Act of Settlement should become insecure. Thus the Parliament voted a resolution against a proposal for the reversal of outlawries from the rebellions of 1641 and 1688, presented an address against the restoration of some of the estates of Lord Clanricarde, defeated an English proposal to reverse the attainder of Lord Clancarty, and passed resolutions declaring that any attempt to disturb the Protestant purchasers of estates forfeited by rebellion would be of dangerous consequence to his Majesty's person and government.

During the earlier period of the century, the English Government was more favourable to the Catholics than the Irish Parliament, and it more than once used its influence to temper the legislation against them. But the religious temperature in the beginning of the eighteenth century was not high, and it was no doubt

lowered by the large number of ostensible conformists in Ireland. The penal laws, however mischievous in other respects, at least attained their immediate end. The country was perfectly quiet. In every period of foreign war and of Jacobite danger it was found possible to withdraw a great portion of the Irish army, and for some eighty years Ireland gave England absolutely no trouble. It was certainly not surprising that in the struggle of the Revolution the Irish Catholics should have taken the side of the Catholic sovereign, of whom they at least had nothing to complain; but Jacobitism in Ireland had never any deep root, and it was wholly different from the sentiment which played so great a part in Scotch history. To the Scotchman it meant the cause of a national dynasty closely associated with the fortunes and the glory of his country. The fact that a Scotch sovereign mounted the British throne had alone made the union of the two crowns tolerable to the weaker and poorer people. In Ireland no such associations existed. The Stuarts were a foreign dynasty, with no hold on the affections of the people; with no part in any page of their history to which they could look back with pleasure. James I. was chiefly associated in the Irish mind with the abolition of the tribal rights and the great confiscations in Ulster; Charles I. with the oppression and fraud of Strafford and the ghastly scenes of carnage and desolation that followed the outbreak of 1641; Charles II. with the Act of Settlement, and the great fraud which deprived a vast portion of the old Catholic loyal gentry of their proprietary rights. If the Catholicism of James II. kindled some faint sympathy in Ireland it was at least far short of enthusiasm, and his conduct there, especially after the battle of the Boyne, was certainly not calculated to stimulate it. An Irish poet described him as a king

with one shoe Irish and the other English, who could neither strike with power nor negotiate with skill, and who left nothing but misfortune to the Gael. The enrolment of nearly all the genuine Jacobites in foreign armies and the ferocious laws enacted under Anne, the last Stuart sovereign in England, had effectually put an end to serious Jacobitism in Ireland. The Pretender, it is true, continued to nominate secretly the bishops of Irish Catholic sees, but the Hanoverian dynasty was immediately, though not enthusiastically, accepted, and not the feeblest movement in Ireland responded to the Jacobite conspiracies and outbreaks in Great Britain.

Few forms of literature breathe a more passionate and more beautiful loyalty than the Jacobite ballads of Scotland. There was much popular Jacobite literature in Ireland, but it seems almost wholly destitute of the note of true poetry and genuine pathos. An Irish poet, however, named Egan O'Rahilly, who lived in the reigns of Anne and George I., wrote in the Irish tongue a poem which (as far as can be judged by a stranger to the language) was of singular beauty and power, bewailing the calamities that had fallen on Ireland by the Revolution. He pays, indeed, a passing tribute to the fallen dynasty, but the true pathos, the genuine feeling of his poetry is elsewhere. He sees in the Revolution the final downfall, the ruin and the exile of the old Catholic gentry of Ireland; depriving the cultivators of the soil of their natural protectors and guides; leaving them in all their helplessness and misery at the mercy of new masters who were aliens in race and language and creed, who were bound to them by no bond of sympathy or affection, who knew nothing and cared nothing for the customs and the traditions of the land. This was, indeed, the profound and

abiding tragedy of Irish history, and its bitter fruits may be traced even to the present hour.<sup>1</sup>

In the long period of profound calm that now prevailed religious divisions gradually softened, and large portions of the penal laws became inoperative. They remained on the Statute-book, but they were looked upon by enlightened Protestants simply as a reserve of power which might be employed if danger arose. The seditious newspaper and the seditious agitator were as yet unknown. The occasional and fitful attempts that were made to strengthen Protestantism by converting Catholics or by planting foreign Protestant settlements among them were much more due to industrial than to theological considerations. They sprang from the conviction that Protestantism brought with it a higher level of industry, civilisation, and order.

The tracts of Swift, and indeed nearly all the contemporary letters, describe the condition of the great body of the agricultural population as scarcely removed from barbarism. They were utterly ignorant, utterly unguided, and abjectly poor. Their agriculture was not only of the rudest, but also of the most wasteful description, fatally impairing the fertility of the soil, and they had all the idleness and all the improvidence of savages. The price of labour was extremely low, and saving was almost unknown. On the other hand, food was extraordinarily cheap; potatoes, milk, and turf were very abundant, and food and fire were nearly the only wants of men in this stage of civilisation. A few hours' labour enabled them to erect their mud hovels, and their clothes were of the humblest description. In good years there was a rude plenty, and living idle lives.

<sup>1</sup> The poems of O'Rahilly, with translation, introduction, and notes by the Rev. Patrick

Dinneen, have been printed in the 3rd volume of the *Irish Texts Society*.

c 1720  
c 1780



in a temperate and healthy climate, they were in general physically strong and constitutionally gay. But if the potatoes failed utter famine at once ensued, and at least two terrible famines desolated Ireland in the first half of the eighteenth century and swept multitudes away.

The one really profitable agricultural industry was that of the grazier, and immense tracts were laid out in pasture. Nature had made Ireland eminently suited for it, and there was an enormous and profitable export of beef and butter from Cork. Turning land into pasture was not only the most profitable kind of farming, it had also the great advantage of leaving the productive energies of the soil unimpaired; and Catholics especially found it desirable, as it enabled them much more easily than in other kinds of agriculture to evade the law restricting their legal profits. The population of Ireland was still very scanty, and there were vast lonely expanses where for many miles scarcely a cottage was to be seen. But the tendency of pasture to encroach on arable land involved many evictions, and it was in the eighteenth century the chief source of agrarian crime. The Houghers of Cattle, who were formidable in the west during the first half of the eighteenth century, and the Whiteboys, who became so formidable about the middle of the century, took their origin chiefly from this cause.

The picture I have drawn of Ireland in the first half of the eighteenth century is a very dark one, but it is possible to portray it in too gloomy colours. If her remote situation brought with it many evils, it at least saved her from the foreign invasions which had desolated some of the fairest countries in Europe, and at home she enjoyed several generations of absolute political tranquillity. Nothing in the Irish history of

the first eighty years of the eighteenth century appears more remarkable to a modern observer than her perfect quiet at times when grave dangers menaced England, and when she was herself almost denuded of troops. There was no force resembling the modern constabulary, and although lawlessness as distinguished from political disaffection was very common, the resident gentry at the head of their own tenantry and of hastily levied volunteers were usually able to cope with disturbances as they arose. The commercial policy of England—though dictated by much the same maxims as that of other countries—was grossly selfish and ruinous to Irish interests. As long as it was in force it was impossible for her to become a really wealthy country, and its effects would have been still worse had it not been mitigated by a large smuggling trade in wool. On the other hand England asked from Ireland no direct tribute. She imposed upon her no part of the burden of her debt, and she undertook her whole naval defence. In the military defence of the Empire Ireland bore rather more than her share, as she provided a force of no less than 12,000 men, exclusively Protestant. This force was chiefly paid for out of the Irish hereditary revenue, and there were great abuses in the manner in which its officers were appointed and multiplied. Civil and ecclesiastical patronage was also grossly abused, and some tens of thousands a year were expended on a most profligate Pension List. But the government of Ireland, considered as a whole, was a very cheap one; taxation was exceedingly light; for a long period it was almost wholly unchanged, and there were none of those exemptions in favour of the rich and to the detriment of the poor that were common on the Continent. The hearth tax, which was a duty of 2s. on every hearth, was the one tax which fell directly

on the poor, and until near the close of the century the only cabins that were legally exempted from it were those of persons who lived upon alms and were unable to get a livelihood from work, and very poor widows.

The country, on the whole, was improving. The larger part of Connaught, it is true, and some remote districts of other provinces, lay almost absolutely outside British law; but there was a flourishing and civilised population in the great towns. Dublin ranked second among the cities of the Empire, and it had a brilliant and cultivated society. Stately mansions were arising; there was a considerable amount of active intellectual life, and throughout the more civilised portion of the country there were already clear signs of increasing though moderate prosperity. The relations of the creeds had greatly improved, and the Irish landlords and large middlemen had acquired a real influence over their tenants. As Protestants, as landlords, and as magistrates they had an almost despotic power. Thrown very much on their own resources they were a military class, and they put down disturbances with a high hand and with little regard for law, but the manner in which at the head of their own tenantry they kept Ireland quiet, combated the Whiteboy outbreaks, and at a later period organised and directed the volunteer movement, showed that they possessed governing qualities of no mean order. They were ceasing to be an exotic class, and had taken root in the soil; they knew their people; they had qualities, and also failings, which were congenial to them, and they commanded a large amount of loyalty and devotion.

The government was a kind of tempered despotism, and the most vital reforms which had been introduced into the English Constitution after the Commonwealth and after the Revolution of 1688 had not been extended

to Ireland. There was no Habeas Corpus Act. There was no Annual Mutiny Act. The judges were still removable at pleasure. There was no law obliging members of Parliament who received offices of profit under the Crown to vacate their seats. The Parliament sat for a whole reign, and that of George II. continued for no less than thirty-three years. The Lord Lieutenant was usually absent from the country about three-quarters of his time of office, and the practical government was in the hands of the Lords Justices, consisting of the Primate and a few great officials. The Primate was always an Englishman, and for many years Primates Boulter, Hoadly, and Stone had an almost despotic influence. The English Parliament claimed and sometimes exercised the right of legislating directly for Ireland without any concurrence of the Irish Parliament. The legitimacy of this claim was a matter of constant dispute. An Irish Statute of Henry VII. had, it is true, decreed that all English Statutes which were then in existence were to be of force in Ireland, but the school of Molyneux strenuously denied that the English Parliament could by its own authority bind Ireland. It, however, not unfrequently did so, and on matters of capital importance. Thus an English Act of 1690 disqualified Catholics from sitting in the Parliament of Ireland. An English Act of 1713 included Ireland in the Schism Act against Nonconformists. An English Act of 1719 not only asserted the right of the English Parliament to legislate for Ireland, but also deprived the Irish House of Lords of its old appellate jurisdiction.

But, apart from this occasional exercise of a much resented power, the English Government had an almost overwhelming influence over the Irish Parliament, owing to the extraordinary powers that were vested in

Decided  
Prerogative

the Privy Councils of England and of Ireland. By a law passed under Henry VII., and called Poyning's Act, it had been enacted that the Irish Parliament should not be summoned till the measures it was called upon to pass had been approved under the Great Seal of England; that Parliament could neither originate nor amend any Bills, and that its sole power was that of rejecting or accepting the measures thus submitted to it. Gradually and by steps which it is not here necessary to enumerate, and by some legal decisions which have been largely disputed, the Irish Parliament regained in a great measure the right of originating Bills, and it claimed, though for a long time unsuccessfully, the right of controlling the national purse. Lord Mountmorres has described the prevailing practice in Irish legislation as it existed before 1782. Before a Parliament is summoned, he tells us, it was the custom that the Lord Lieutenant and Irish Council should send over an important Bill as the reason for summoning that Assembly. By custom this Bill was always a Money Bill, 'and it was constantly rejected, as a Money Bill which originated in the Council was contrary to a known maxim that the Commons hold the purse of the nation. . . . Propositions for laws, or heads of Bills as they are called, originated indifferently in either House. After two readings and a committal they were sent by the Council to England, and were submitted, usually by the English Privy Council, to the Attorney and Solicitor General; and from thence they were returned to the Council of Ireland, from whence they were sent to the Commons if they originated there (if not, to the Lords), and after three readings they were sent up to the House of Lords, where they went through the same stages; and then the Lord Lieutenant gave the royal assent in the same form which is observed in

Great Britain. In all these stages in England and Ireland, it is to be remembered that any Bill was liable to be rejected, amended, or altered, but that when they had passed the Great Seal of England no alteration could be made by the Irish Parliament.<sup>1</sup>

The ultimate form, therefore, which every Irish measure assumed was given to it by the authorities in England. They had full power either of altering or rejecting the measures of the Irish Parliament, and that Parliament, though it might reject Bills which were returned to it from England in an amended form, had no power of altering them.

In addition to this constitutional subordination, the subservience of the Irish Parliament was secured by the nature of its constituencies. The representation of the counties appears to have been at all times tolerably sound, but the borough system had been developed to an enormous extent under the Stuarts, and chiefly with the object of securing a complete ascendancy to the Crown. Out of the 300 members who constituted the House of Commons, no less than 216 sat for boroughs or manors. An immense proportion of these were treasury boroughs or boroughs at the disposal of persons connected with the Government, and they gave the administration an overwhelming power. In the course of time, however, a large proportion of these small boroughs fell into the hands of great resident Irish noblemen or commoners, and this fact speedily modified Irish politics.

A system such as I have described had little claim to be regarded as representative government, especially as it was only at very long intervals that even the more independent members came into contact with their

<sup>1</sup> Lord Mountmorres' *History of the Irish Parliament*, i. 58-59.

Peyning's  
law

constituents, and as they had no connection with the Catholics who formed the great majority of the Irish people. It is probable, however, that the Irish Parliament, even in its worst time, contained men of knowledge and ability who were well acquainted with the wants and circumstances of Ireland, and like all legislative bodies it had a natural tendency to extend the sphere of its authority. In the later years of George II. the influence of Boyle, who was Speaker of the House of Commons and who afterwards became the first Lord Shannon, began to be set up in opposition to that of Primate Stone, who for many years had directed affairs in Ireland. Boyle was the largest borough owner in Ireland, and he grouped around him what was called the Irish, as distinguished from the English, interest. The questions that divided these parties were in the main questions of patronage and power, but there was some real national significance in the efforts of a group of great Irish noblemen to put an end to a system under which the most important and most lucrative places in Ireland were bestowed on men of another country, who were often habitual absentees, and in which Irish interests were systematically subordinated to English ones.

The disputes on financial questions to which I have already referred took a more acute form. In the preceding years a small national debt had grown up in Ireland. It had risen between 1715 and 1729 from 50,000*l.* to rather more than 220,000*l.*, and for some years it continued slowly to increase. After the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, however, a considerable wave of prosperity passed over the country, and in 1751 there was a large surplus in the Exchequer, and a violent dispute arose between the Crown and the Parliament about its disposal. The Crown maintained that it

should be considered as a part of the hereditary revenue, and that the Commons had no right even to discuss the disposition of it without the previous consent of the King. In order to establish this position the Lord Lieutenant opened the session of 1751 by a speech signifying the royal consent to the appropriation of a portion of the surplus to the liquidation of the National Debt. The House passed a bill with that object, but omitted all notice of the royal assent. In England the Privy Council inserted in the preamble of the Bill an alteration signifying that such an assent had been given, and the House shrank from rejecting the Bill and passed it in its altered form. In 1753 a similar dispute arose, but the opposition had grown stronger and the indignation against the conduct of the English Government was very intense. When the Bill was returned from England with the same alteration as in 1751, it was fiercely resisted, and at last by a majority of five rejected on account of the alteration. The Government, however, dealt with the question in a very peremptory manner. All the servants of the Crown who had voted in the majority were dismissed, and a portion of the surplus was applied by royal authority and without parliamentary sanction to the liquidation of the debt.

These things had a very considerable influence upon Irish parliamentary history and this influence was by no means entirely good. For the first time since the Revolution there was an organised opposition in the Irish House of Commons, and it was supported by a really popular movement throughout the country. The price of boroughs trebled in a few years and the interest in parliamentary proceedings immensely increased. On the other hand there was much more parliamentary corruption and the national expenditure rapidly rose.



The House of Commons, having failed to obtain the control of the surplus in the Exchequer, resolved that no such surplus should again exist; it began systematically to vote large bounties and grants for manufactures and public works, and it was its special object to throw the additional expenditure on the hereditary revenue so as to make it impossible for the King again to govern without the assistance of Parliament. It effected this object by voting bounties and other charges without imposing any specific taxes for paying them, thus placing the burden on the revenue at large. A curious law for the encouragement of tillage was voted and accepted by the Viceroy, granting a bounty in perpetuity on the carriage of corn to the Dublin market, and in a few years this bounty amounted to an annual charge of more than 50,000*l.* upon the hereditary revenue. The bounty system was by no means wholly evil, for in a country so backward and so torpid much artificial stimulus to industry was required, and a large number of the enterprises and institutions assisted by the Irish Parliament were of incontestable utility. But the new policy was a great source of jobbery and extravagance.

The Government at the same time found it necessary to bestow much more attention than in former years on the management of the Irish Parliament, and large sums were expended for this purpose. Boyle succeeded in obtaining the ascendancy he desired, but he was bought by a peerage, and pensions and honours and places were now habitually bestowed with a sole view to political services. Power had passed to a great extent into Irish hands, but it was chiefly the hands of a few great Irish borough owners who obtained the name of 'undertakers' because they undertook, in consideration of obtaining a large share of the patronage

of the Crown, to carry on the King's business in Parliament. Parliamentary corruption had not been necessary and had probably not been largely practised in the first years of the century, but great sums which would once have been devoted chiefly to rewarding English politicians were now employed in securing Irish parliamentary influence. Between 1755 and 1761 the Pension List rose from 38,000*l.* to more than 64,000*l.* Even in the House of Commons there was a strong sense of the enormity of the rise. In 1756 a measure for obliging members who accepted places of profit or pensions from the Crown to vacate their seats was only rejected by eighty-five to fifty-nine, and in the following year resolutions against the abuses in the Pension List were carried in the House, and the Commons, with the Speaker at their head, placed them in the hands of the Lord Lieutenant to be forwarded to the King. Whatever doubt there might be of the sincerity of the members of Parliament, there was at least none of the feeling beyond its walls. An energetic and enlightened, though as yet purely Protestant, public opinion had grown up. The dread of revolution and confiscations which had once dominated over all other questions of internal politics had passed away. The writings of Swift and Berkeley had sunk deeply into Irish Protestant opinion. A determination to place Irish government on the same constitutional basis as the government of England, to obtain for the Irish Protestants what English Protestants had obtained by the Revolution of 1688, and to make the Irish Parliament a really representative and independent body had spread far and wide, and when the death of George II., in 1760, dissolved the Parliament which had lasted through a whole generation, all the great constitutional questions rose rapidly into prominence. Meet-

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ings and associations were formed demanding septennial Parliaments; the reduction of the Pension List; the immovability of the judges; the enactment of a Habeas Corpus Bill and the independence of Parliament, and at the election which took place in the following year a large number of members were returned pledged to support such measures.

## HENRY FLOOD

It was in the last year of the long Parliament of George II. that Henry Flood, the subject of the present biography, first appeared in the field of politics. He was the son of the Chief Justice of the King's Bench in Ireland. He entered Trinity College as a fellow-commoner, but terminated his career, as is still sometimes done, at Oxford, where he applied himself with much energy to the classics, and especially to those studies which are advantageous to an orator in forming a pure and elevated style. For this purpose he learned considerable portions of Cicero by heart. He wrote out Demosthenes and Æschines on the Crown, two books of the 'Paradise Lost,' a translation of two books of Homer, and the finest passages from every play of Shakespeare. Like most persons who combine great ambition with great powers of expression, he devoted himself much to poetry, his principal production being an 'Ode to Fame,' which appears to have been much admired by his friends, and is written in the formal, florid style that was then popular. He was also passionately devoted to private theatricals, which were very fashionable in Ireland and which contributed not a little to form his style of elocution.

The portraits drawn by his contemporaries are exceedingly attractive. They represent him as genial, frank, and open; endowed with brilliant conversational powers and the happiest manner, 'the most easy and best-tempered man in the world, as well as the most

Talents  
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sensible.'<sup>1</sup> His figure in early manhood was exceedingly graceful, and his countenance, though afterwards soured and distorted by disease, of corresponding beauty. He was of a remarkably social disposition, delighting in witty society and in field-sports, somewhat prone to dissipation, but readily conciliating the affection of all classes. Lord Mountmorres, who knew him chiefly in his later years, and was inclined to judge him with severity, describes him as a pre-eminently truthful man and exceedingly averse to flattery. He married a member of the great house of Beresford, who brought him a large fortune, and as his father was a man of wealth and position, he was at no time embarrassed by pecuniary difficulties, and was enabled to devote himself exclusively to the service of his country. When we add to this that he was a man of great natural eloquence, indomitable courage, and singularly acute judgment, it will be seen that he possessed almost every requisite for a great public leader.

He entered Parliament in 1759 as member for Kilkenny, being then in his twenty-seventh year, and took his seat on the benches of the Opposition.

It was not probable that a Parliament constituted like that of Ireland should have given much scope for eloquence, and it was not until the reign of George III. that its debates were reported, but the Parliament of George II. contained at least one orator who appears to have been very remarkable. This was Anthony Malone, the father of the well-known editor of Shakespeare. He was a lawyer in large practice, a prominent member of more than one Government, and though no fragments of his speeches have survived, his calm and perspicacious judgment and his eminently judicial elo-

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<sup>1</sup> Grattan.

quence made a deep impression on some of the most enlightened of his contemporaries. Grattan describes him as a 'man of the finest intellect that any country ever produced,' and he quotes a remarkable saying of Lord Sackville, who was Irish Secretary in 1753, that the elder Pitt, Murray, and Malone were the three ablest men he had ever known, and that of these three, if a question had to be argued before twelve wise men, he would have preferred Malone. Gerard Hamilton, another very able Irish Secretary, has attested the extraordinary power of his speaking, and at a time when the question of making an Irishman Chancellor was first raised, Lord Camden, while maintaining that an Englishman should always be chosen, declared that if this rule were broken the acknowledged superiority of Malone placed him above all competitors. He appears to have been a man of high and independent character, and the accusation of timidity which was sometimes brought against him was probably only due to his constitutional repugnance to violent words or actions. He was an early advocate of the mitigation of the penal code against the Catholics, and although he always abstained from factious opposition, he was twice dismissed from a lucrative office on account of the course which he pursued. He was deprived of the office of Prime Serjeant on account of his opposition to the alteration of the Money Bill in 1753, and of the office of Chancellor of the Exchequer because he objected to sending over a Money Bill originating in England as the ground for summoning the first Parliament of George III. He was, however, at this time in the decline of life, and he does not appear to have taken any considerable part in the new reign.

Another remarkable man was Hely Hutchinson,

who belonged to a later generation, and whose political career was almost exactly contemporary with that of Flood. He was nearly always connected with the Government, and he had the reputation of being a very inveterate place-hunter. Lord North is reported to have said of him that, 'if you gave him England and Ireland for a domain, he would ask the Isle of Man for a potato-garden,' and it must be acknowledged that few Irishmen have obtained and combined so many important posts. During the last twenty years of his life he was Provost of Trinity College, a dignity which was given him merely for his political services, and which he held in conjunction with a seat in the House of Commons and with some important political offices. His administration of the University was a very stormy one; he excited many jealousies and animosities, and he was at every period of his career the object of much bitter and probably malevolent criticism; but Gerard Hamilton pronounced him to be not only a very able but also a perfectly honest politician, and both Lord Townshend and Lord Harcourt have spoken of his great abilities and experience, and of his excellent private character.

He was one of the earliest and one of the steadiest advocates of a liberal policy towards Catholics, and he has left emphatic testimony to their loyalty during the period of Jacobite conspiracy. He was probably the first Irishman who clearly saw that a system of united and unsectarian education was one of the chief needs of Ireland. During his administration Catholics were freely admitted by connivance as students into Trinity College, and he lived to see one of his favourite objects attained when the degrees of the University were opened to them in 1793. Hutchinson would gladly have gone still further. He was keenly sensible of

the danger of an ignorant, separatist priesthood, and he urged that a Catholic faculty of theology should be established in Trinity College, and that while on all secular subjects Protestants and Catholics should compete together for the same honours, at the same examinations and on the same terms, full provision should be made for the religious instruction of the Catholic students by their own priests. An educated priesthood and a wide-spread system of good secular education was, he contended, what Ireland most needed. He advocated the foundation of a number of sizarships in Trinity College for the cheap education of the poorer Catholic students, and the establishment of diocesan schools endowed by the State for the purpose of preparing them gratuitously for the University. He spoke with horror of the laws which denied education to the Irish Catholics, but at the same time deprecated the foundation of any sectarian colleges. The people of Ireland, he contended, would never be truly knit together without a good system of common and united secular education, freed from every element of sectarianism, but accompanied by ample facilities for separate religious instruction.

On another great subject Hutchinson was far in advance of his age. He was one of the very first politicians in the three kingdoms to adopt fully the doctrines of Adam Smith, and on all commercial subjects he was one of the most enlightened statesmen of his age. The palpably ruinous effects of the commercial restrictions had prepared the minds of intelligent Irishmen to welcome the new teaching, and a small but remarkably able school of Irish economists speedily arose. Hutchinson was their most conspicuous member. His treatise on 'the commercial restraints of Ireland' was



published only three years after the 'Wealth of Nations.' It is a work of great ability and contains the fullest and best statement of this class of Irish grievances. In the discussion of the constitutional questions, however, to which Flood devoted himself, Hutchinson did not take any conspicuous place. He gave several Liberal votes, but he was certainly not a keen, he was probably not a very convinced reformer, and he usually acted with the Government. He was a skilful debater. His speeches were always marked by good sense, and in light sarcasm and raillery he was superior to Flood, but in the weightier qualities of parliamentary eloquence he appears to have been decidedly his inferior.

*eloquence*

At the same time the eloquence of Flood, as far as we can judge from the description of contemporaries and from the fragments that remain, was not quite equal to that of some later Irish orators. He was too sententious and too laboured. He had, at least in his later years, but little fire and imagination; his taste was by no means pure; and his language though full of force and meaning was often tinged with pedantry. He appears, however, to have been one of the greatest of parliamentary reasoners. To those who are acquainted with the speeches of Grattan, and know the wonderful force with which that orator condensed an argument into an epigram, and disencumbered it of all superfluous matter, it will be sufficient to say that Flood was generally considered the more convincing reasoner of the two. He was a master of grave sarcasm, of invective, of weighty, judicial statement, and of reply; and he brought to every question an unusually wide range of constitutional knowledge, and a keen and prescient, though somewhat sceptical, judgment. He was indeed far from being a mere rheto-

rician, and he does not appear to have had any extravagant opinion of the value of rhetoric. He once spoke of how little 'an ability of expressing sentiments clearly, correctly, and forcibly' implies 'quickness of conception, soundness of judgment, or any other natural faculty of the mind.' He is said to have surpassed all his contemporaries in the irritating and embarrassing tactics of an Opposition leader. There was an air of solemn dignity in his manner which added much to the effect of his greater speeches, but did not suit trivial subjects. Grattan said of him, that 'on a small subject he was miserable. Put a distaff in his hand, and, like Hercules, he made sad work of it; but give him a thunderbolt, and he had the arm of a Jove.'

The exertions of Flood soon produced their fruit. Public opinion began to show itself outside the walls of Parliament, and a powerful Opposition was organised within. The chief objects he proposed to himself were the shortening of the duration of Parliament, the reduction of the Pension List, the creation of a constitutional militia, and the independence of the Irish Parliament in accordance with the principles of Molyneux. In pursuing the first of these objects he found a powerful auxiliary in Charles Lucas, a man who then occupied a prominent position in Irish politics. Lucas had been originally a Dublin apothecary. He was a man of little education and no property, but of a strong, shrewd, coarse intellect, great courage, and indefatigable perseverance in hunting up and exposing abuses. In 1741, having detected as he thought some encroachments that had been made by the aldermen of Dublin on the general elective rights of the citizens, he entered into a long and acrimonious controversy on the subject which lasted for many years, and he at the same time took an

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active part in general politics. He strongly maintained the independence of the Irish Parliament on the principles of Molyneux, but he denounced its corruption in so pointed and personal a manner; and he showed himself so active in attacking local abuses that he made himself many enemies. The grand jury of Dublin ordered his addresses to be burnt, and the House of Commons in 1749 summoned him to appear at its bar for libel, proclaimed him an enemy to the country, and addressed the Lord Lieutenant to order his prosecution. A warrant was issued and Lucas fled to England, where he became a physician and practised with some success, and he wrote in exile an appeal to the people of both countries, as well as some medical works, the most important being a treatise on Bath waters. A *nolle prosequi* at last enabled him to return, and his popularity was now so great that he was elected member for Dublin in 1761. He had lost the use of his limbs, and his speeches—which were chiefly remarkable for their violent vituperation—were all delivered sitting. He denounced the pensioners and the Government with unsparing bitterness, but there was no one against whom his sarcasm was more envenomed than against his own colleague. That colleague was the Recorder of Dublin, the father of Henry Grattan. Lucas brought forward a Septennial Bill, but it never became law. He assisted Flood in Parliament by his speeches, but exercised a far greater influence outside Parliament by articles in the ‘Freeman’s Journal,’ of which he was one of the chief founders. He died in 1771.<sup>1</sup>

For about ten years the independent party in

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<sup>1</sup> His pamphlets and addresses have been collected; they form one thick and tedious volume. Some of his speeches may be found in Caldwell’s *Debates*. There is an excellent account of Lucas by Mr. Dunlop in the *Biographical Dictionary*.

the Irish Parliament carried on a desultory warfare on the questions I have enumerated. Their influence was shown in the creation of a strong and growing public feeling outside Parliament, and of a small but able Opposition within its walls; but though they often embarrassed a minister and sometimes carried a division, their measures were always ultimately rejected either by Parliament or the Privy Council. In 1767, however, a great and unforeseen change took place in their prospects, in consequence of the appointment of Lord Townshend as Lord Lieutenant, and of the new line of policy which he was instructed to pursue.

Lord Townshend was brother of the more famous Charles Townshend, whose brilliant but disastrous career closed almost immediately after this appointment. A soldier of some distinction, with considerable talents and popular and convivial manners, he entered upon his administration under very promising circumstances. His first speech from the throne announced and favoured the project of making the judges irremovable; and a Bill to that effect was accordingly carried through Parliament, but it was returned from England so altered that it was rejected; and this important reform, which had been obtained in England at the Revolution, was not extended to Ireland till 1782. But the unpopularity which resulted from this failure was more than compensated in the following year by the enthusiasm produced by the concession of one of the strongest wishes of the Irish Protestants. The limitation of the duration of Parliament was justly regarded by them as the first condition of all constitutional progress, and Flood had given it a foremost place in his programme of reform. The members of Parliament, very naturally, disliked it, but they did

not venture to resist the popular outcry; they felt secure that if they passed the Bill it would be afterwards rejected in England; and they were not averse to obtaining in this manner some popularity with their constituents. This little comedy was played three times, but in 1768 the English Cabinet resolved to yield. They were not uninfluenced by the violent commotion that had arisen in Ireland, by the unpopularity produced by the defeat of the Judges Bill, and by a belief that shorter parliaments would break the power of the Irish aristocracy, and they especially desired to strengthen the hands of Lord Townshend for obtaining a measure on which they had greatly set their hearts—an augmentation of the army on the Irish establishment from 12,000 to 15,000. The Limitation Bill as it passed through Parliament was a septennial one, but it was changed in England into an octennial one, which was better suited to a Parliament that only sat every second year, and in that form it became law. The policy of Flood and Lucas had so far triumphed, and the Parliament became in some real sense an organ of the popular will. Townshend had also held out hopes that the English Government were prepared to consider with favour the demand for a Habeas Corpus Act and for the creation of a national militia.

The Lord Lieutenant, however, who was the object of a general enthusiasm in the beginning of 1768, was destined to become one of the most unpopular who have ever ruled in Ireland, and to give an unprecedented impulse to the national spirit. As I have already said, it had been the custom of his predecessors to reside very little in Ireland, and the management of Parliament was chiefly in the hands of four or five great borough-owners, who undertook to carry on the business of the Government in consideration of obtaining

a monopoly of its patronage. This system Lord Townshend resolved to destroy. If his object had been simply to check corruption, or to make Parliament in some degree popular, it would have been laudable, and a Lord Lieutenant who was habitually resident was sure to be acceptable to Dublin; but the real end of his policy was of a different nature. The great Irish families were grasping, rapacious, and corrupt; but they also constituted in some measure an independent Irish party, and Lord Townshend was instructed to break their power, to restore to the Executive the patronage and influence which they had gradually intercepted, to make the Lord Lieutenant once more the real and efficient governor of the country, and the Parliament directly and exclusively subservient to his influence.

(cf. Burke -)  
Deserter  
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The first dispute was about the Augmentation of the Irish army. It was contended in opposition to it that the finances of the country were not in the position to support a considerable addition to the expenditure; that the existing force of 12,000 men, if compared with the army raised in England, was a more than sufficient contribution on the part of Ireland to the defence of the Empire; that there was an enormous amount of jobbing in the Irish army which made it proportionately much more expensive than the army in England; that while the new troops were mainly intended for Colonial garrisons, Ireland was bound neither by sympathy nor interest to assist in the subjugation of America, and that though supported by Irish revenues, the Irish army was raised and governed under an English and not under an Irish statute. The Government made, however, two very valuable concessions. One, which was especially pleasing to the Irish country gentry, was that Ireland should no longer be liable in time of war to be left denuded of troops, for it was to be

provided that, except in the gravest emergency, 12,000 out of the 15,000 soldiers could not be removed from Ireland without the assent of the Irish Parliament. The other was that the Irish battalions should be assimilated to the English ones, and the excessive number of officers, and especially of absentee generals, reduced. On the whole the measure appears to have been received under these conditions with a considerable amount of favour, though Flood remained discontented, but the Undertakers, who had hitherto carried on the Government, after much bargaining about terms for themselves, refused to support it, and in the first of Lord Townshend's Parliaments they succeeded in defeating it. Nearly at the same time the Habeas Corpus Bill, which had passed through the Irish Parliament, was rejected by the Privy Council in England.

Townshend believed that the Augmentation Bill, when coupled with the clause securing the presence of 12,000 men in Ireland, was not really unpopular with the independent country gentlemen. The opposition of Flood does not appear at this time to have been at all decided, and Townshend had great hopes of soon bringing him into office. Flood had vehemently attacked the custom of appointing Englishmen to the chief judicial posts in Ireland, and on the death of Chancellor Bowes, Townshend did his utmost to procure an Irishman as a successor, but the English Cabinet, acting on the advice of Lord Camden and Lord Northington, refused their consent; and he also tried, though equally unsuccessfully, to induce the Government to consent to some relaxation of the commercial code. But his first object was now to break down the ascendancy of the aristocracy of large borough-owners in the Irish Parliament, and to establish the full and entire supremacy of the English Executive. The con-

stitutional dependency of the Parliament was emphatically asserted, and the result of this policy was that the great aristocratic families were thrown into a close though temporary alliance with the party of Flood and of the Patriots.

The Octennial Bill having been carried, Parliament was dissolved on May 28, 1768, but the new Parliament did not meet till the October of the following year. During this long interval there had been a great deal of bargaining with a view of obtaining a Government majority. Several supporters of Townshend were made peers or baronets or promoted in the peerage. It was clearly shown that the Lord Lieutenant and not the Irish oligarchy was now to be the true source of Government patronage. There was much negotiation with the smaller borough-owners and with the independent members. The Augmentation Bill was made more acceptable by an express stipulation that it was only in the case of invasion, or rebellion in Great Britain, that the 12,000 men could be withdrawn without the consent of the Parliament, and that the Irish army should be established on the authority of an Irish and not, as hitherto, on the authority of an English Act of Parliament. By this last concession Hely Hutchinson was induced to support the Government. On the whole, Lord Townshend believed that he had secured a majority in the coming Parliament, though he was under no illusion about the corrupt motives that governed its leading members.

His hopes, however, were soon deceived. The struggle in the new Parliament began upon the question of a Money Bill. A large proportion of the Irish members had always, as I have said, aimed at obtaining for their House a complete control of the national purse, and the practice of originating or altering Money



Bills in England had always been resented. It was contended by some on very doubtful grounds that this practice was illegal; by others that, even if strictly legal, it was incompatible with all national independence, and that the Commons should resist it by the exercise of their undoubted right of rejecting any Money Bill which did not originate with themselves. A Money Bill originated by the Privy Council in 1769 was rejected by the first Octennial Parliament, as a similar Bill had been in the previous Parliament; but, instead of following the usual course of doing so without assigning any reason, the new Parliament declared in its resolution that the Bill was rejected because it did not take its rise in the House of Commons. Having taken this step, the House proceeded to prove its loyalty to the Crown by voting unusually large supplies and by passing the Augmentation Bill; but no sooner had these votes been passed than the Lord Lieutenant went down to the House, delivered in the form of a speech an angry protest, which he caused to be inserted in the journals of the House of Lords, and prorogued the Parliament though pressing business was on hand, and though several temporary statutes were expiring and required renewal.

For fourteen months it was not again summoned. In the meantime the Government fought their battle by numerous dismissals, and by the most lavish corruption in the forms of peerages, pensions, and places. It was afterwards a confession or a boast of Lord Clare that not less than half a million of money was spent in obtaining a majority. With such a Constitution as that of the Irish Parliament, such efforts could scarcely fail. When the House met in February 1771, the customary congratulatory addresses to the Lord Lieutenant were duly carried, though not without great difficulty,

and after a powerful opposition from Flood in the Commons and from Charlemont in the Lords. In seventeen divisions in the House of Commons on the first two days of the session the Government triumphed, but Ponsonby, the Speaker, resigned his office rather than present the address, and when another altered Money Bill was afterwards introduced, it was rejected on the motion of Flood without a division. The Commissioners of Revenue, who were not allowed to sit in the English House of Commons, had seats in that of Ireland, and Lord Townshend, with a view to increasing his parliamentary influence, resolved to increase their number from seven to twelve. Flood denounced the proposed measure, and on his motion the Parliament passed a resolution asserting the sufficiency of seven. In accordance with another resolution, the opinion of the House was formally laid before the Lord Lieutenant, who carried out his intention in defiance of it. Every nerve was strained on both sides. Repeated votes of censure were brought forward and some of them were carried. Sixteen peers drew up a protest in terms of unexampled violence against the proceedings of the Viceroy, and outside Parliament public feeling was fiercely roused. Lord Townshend succumbed to the storm. He was recalled in September 1772, but before he left Ireland he succeeded in obtaining a vote of thanks from Parliament.

During the course of this contest a series of political papers appeared in Dublin, under the title of 'Baratariana,' which produced an extraordinary sensation, and are not even now quite forgotten. They consisted of a history of Barataria, being a sketch of Lord Townshend's administration, with fictitious names; of a series of letters modelled after Junius; and of three or four satirical poems. The history and the poems were

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by Sir Hercules Langrishe, the dedication and the letters signed 'Posthumus' and 'Pertinax' by Grattan, and those signed 'Syndercombe' by Flood. Flood's letters are powerful and well-reasoned, though very violent, but, like his speeches, they are too laboured in style, and they certainly give no countenance to the notion started at one time that he was the author of the letters of Junius.

Flood had now attained to a position that had as yet been unparalleled in Ireland. He had shown that great abilities unconnected with office could find a real scope for action in the Irish Parliament. He had proved himself beyond all comparison the greatest popular orator that his country had as yet produced, and also a consummate master of Parliamentary tactics. Under Parliamentary conditions that were exceedingly unfavourable and in an atmosphere charged with corruption, venality, and subserviency, he had created a party before which ministers had begun to quail, and had inoculated the Protestant constituencies with a genuine spirit of liberty and of self-reliance. The concession of the Octennial Act was mainly ascribed to his efforts; he had done more than any previous Irishman to interest the country in parliamentary discussions, and he had placed before it a programme of reforms which gave a direction and an impulse to public opinion. No rival had as yet risen to detract from his fame, and no suspicion rested upon his conduct. The tide now began to turn. We have henceforth to describe the rapid decadence of his power. We have to follow him descending from his proud position, eclipsed by a more splendid genius, soured by disappointment, and clouded by suspicion, and sinking, after one brilliant flash of departing glory, into a position of comparative insignificance.

Lord Harcourt succeeded Lord Townshend as Viceroy. He came over to Ireland some time before the meeting of Parliament, which did not take place till October 1773. His government was intended to be a viceroyalty of conciliation, and it was noticed that Flood, as well as the more aristocratic leaders of the late Opposition, were present at his first levees. One of the chief objects of the new Lord Lieutenant was to win the support of Flood, of whose great abilities and influence in Parliament he formed the highest estimate. Blaquiere, the new Chief Secretary, was authorised to offer him the first great office that became vacant, and Harcourt wrote to England that it would be advisable to secure Mr. Flood almost at any expense, 'rather than risk the opposition of so formidable a leader.' These overtures were successful, and having at first supported the Administration as an independent member, he at length consented, in the October of 1775, to accept the office of Vice-Treasurer, with a salary of 3,500*l.* a year, and a seat in the Privy Council.

Of all the steps of his career this has been the most censured. The reasons, however, which Flood alleged for joining the Government are on record, and, besides contemporary letters and conversations that were preserved, we possess his own very elaborate vindication in a speech which he delivered in 1783 in reply to the invective of Grattan. These reasons seem to me amply sufficient to exculpate him from the charge of corruption. Flood had never been a factious or systematic opponent of Governments. He had promised his warm support to that of Lord Bristol, who had accepted the Lord Lieutenancy under Lord Chatham; his persistent hostility to Lord Townshend, as he himself explicitly states, only dated from the prorogation, and it was confined to particular measures of a Viceroy who had been

recalled. He desired, it is true, to make the Irish Legislature as independent as that of England, and it was an intelligible policy to stand apart from every Government which refused to make the concession; but such a policy then appeared absolutely suicidal. The constitution of Parliament and the character of its members made it seem utterly impossible that a measure of independence could be carried in the teeth of the Government, and if it were carried there was not the faintest probability of such a movement outside the walls as would compel the English Parliament to yield to it. It was not possible for Flood or for any man to predict the wonderful impulse that was given by the American War and by the arms of the volunteers.

Of the two other capital objects of his policy, the limitation of Parliament had been carried, and the establishment of a militia had for the present become impossible and unnecessary through the large augmentation of the regular army. The success of his opposition to Lord Townshend's Administration was chiefly due to the accidental alliance of some of the most selfish members of the aristocracy with his party, and even then two votes of thanks to the Lord Lieutenant were carried. When Lord Townshend was recalled the 'Undertakers' at once returned to their old allegiance, the party of Flood speedily dwindled, and it appeared evident that under the existing constitution of Parliament this party could not reasonably hope to do more than slightly modify the course of events.

Under these circumstances Flood contended that the true policy of patriots was to act with the Government, and endeavour to make its measures diverge in the direction of public utility. A patriot in office would be obliged to waive the discussion of some measures which he desired, but he could do more for the

popular cause than if he were leading a hopeless minority. In the restricted constitution of Ireland the Privy Council was a more independent body even than the Parliament, for it was there that the principles on which the country was governed were in reality determined. A voice in that body was of the utmost importance to a reformer. Flood himself was so indisputably the first man in Parliament that he reasonably held that he could greatly influence the Government, and Lord Harcourt was an honourable and liberal man, and he came to supersede the Viceroy whom Flood had most bitterly opposed.

At such a time, and estimating the strength of parties when Ireland was in its normal condition, Flood concluded that the discussion of the independence of Parliament might be advantageously postponed, if its postponement were purchased by some minor concessions on the part of the Government, and the early policy of Harcourt showed a great disposition to make them. The creation of five new Commissioners of Revenue had been one of the measures of Lord Townshend which Flood had most vehemently opposed. One of the first acts of the new Administration was to abolish these commissioners and reunite the Boards of Customs and Excise which Townshend had divided. The new Government recommended an absentee tax of 2*d.* in the pound on the rents of absentee proprietors. The measure was welcomed with enthusiasm by Flood, and was defended by him in Parliament with extraordinary ability. It was ultimately rejected in the Irish House of Commons and the Government were secretly in favour of that rejection, but they were at least its ostensible supporters and there was much hope that it would be revived. Some prospect was held out of a relaxation of the commercial restrictions which were

the great economical grievance of Ireland, and a measure, which Flood warmly supported, was carried granting certain bounties on the export of Irish corn to foreign countries. It must be added that by becoming Vice-Treasurer Flood restored to Ireland a great Irish office which had hitherto been always given to Englishmen. These reasons, he said, determined him to accept office, and there appears to be no valid reason for questioning his account, though in his negotiations with the Government he unquestionably placed his pretensions very high, and personal considerations played an unduly prominent part. It may, I think, be truly said that the faults of his character were not those of corruption. A certain avarice of fame, an excessive solicitude about opinion, made him often jealous of competitors, fretful and uncertain as a colleague, anxious to identify himself with all great measures, and prone to exaggerate his share in their success. But in no other part of his life was he open to a suspicion of being governed by love of money; nor was he in this respect much tempted, for he possessed a large private fortune and had no children.

Lord Charlemont protested strongly against the resolution of Flood, and there can be no doubt that it formed the fatal turning point of his life. In the very session in which Flood accepted office, Grattan entered the House of Commons, and he soon occupied the position which Flood would naturally have held. For nearly seven years Flood remained in office, and during that period he was obliged to keep silence on those great constitutional questions which in former years he had ceaselessly expounded. His character was no longer above suspicion, and the confidence of the people—the chief element of his power—had passed away. The popular mind detects quickly a change of opinion

or of political attitude, but it seldom cares to analyse carefully the motives that may have produced it. The absentee tax was so strongly opposed in England that it was not revived. The Newfoundland fisheries, it is true, were thrown open to Ireland and a few slight commercial relaxations were granted, but they were much less than Flood desired or than the necessities of Irish finances demanded. Supply Bills were still altered and a Habeas Corpus Bill was again rejected in England. The same fate befell another Militia Bill, and a Bill for making the tenure of judges secure. A two years' embargo was imposed upon Ireland in consequence of the American War; and in this unpopular measure Flood was compelled to acquiesce. Above all, the Irish Parliament was induced, though with some difficulty, to commit itself decisively against the Americans in the great struggle that had begun.

Like very many politicians of his time, Flood seems to have regarded the subjugation of America as of vital importance to the Empire. 'Destruction,' he once predicted in a characteristic sentence, 'will come upon the British Empire like the coldness of death. It will creep upon it from the extreme parts.' With the assent of the Irish Parliament four thousand Irish troops were sent to fight against the Americans. The inducement was that the pay would be saved to Ireland; the objections were, that it left Ireland without the stipulated number of troops, and in a measure defenceless, and that this extraordinary exertion seemed to imply an extraordinary amount of zeal against a cause which was coming to be more and more regarded as that of justice and of freedom. Flood defended the measure, and designated the troops as 'armed negotiators.' It was to this unfortunate expression that Grattan alluded when he described him, in his famous



invective, as standing 'with a metaphor in his mouth and a bribe in his pocket, a champion against the rights of America—the only hope of Ireland, and the only refuge of the liberties of mankind.'

The American question added largely to the difficulties of the closing period of Lord Harcourt's Administration. The Presbyterians in the north were generally and violently in favor of the Americans, and the principles that were at issue in the struggle had a manifest bearing on the constitutional position of Ireland. The controversy had turned on the respective powers of local legislatures and of the British Parliament, and if Great Britain established her right to tax America without her consent it would be impossible to resist the extension of the same principle to Ireland. A powerful and independent body in the House of Commons strenuously resisted the determination of the majority to make Ireland an active party against the colonists, and the exigency of the struggle, as well as a dissolution of the House of Commons which took place in the spring of 1776, obliged the Viceroy to resort even more lavishly than his predecessor to corruption. Eighteen Irish peers were created in a single day and twelve peers were promoted in the peerage. The Pension List was rapidly increasing; 80,000*l.* was added in this Administration to the public expenditure, and, in spite of increased taxation, the debt rose by quick strides to a million of pounds. The war with the colonies, and still more the rupture with France, had produced extreme distress. It was becoming evident that bankruptcy must speedily arrive unless either some great economy was introduced into the system of government or some new sources of wealth were opened. In the opinion of all the best judges an abolition of the commercial disabilities which so fatally cramped the indus-

try of Ireland was the one real remedy for the disease, but such a measure would have to encounter the full force of manufacturing jealousy in England. In the autumn of 1776 Lord Harcourt resigned, and was replaced in November by the Earl of Buckinghamshire. In the early part of that year it appears that Flood had entered, though without success, into negotiations for obtaining a seat in the British House of Commons under the patronage of Lord North.

Flood appears to have given an efficient support to the Government of Lord Harcourt during all the proceedings that have been described, though he afterwards claimed to have tried in the Privy Council to have given a more liberal bias to its policy. In the beginning of the Administration of Lord Buckinghamshire he showed himself much more alienated from the Government. He disliked the new Chief Secretary, Sir R. Heron. He absented himself from the meetings of the Privy Council. He complained that he was treated as 'a mere placeman.' He sat in the House of Commons a silent, moody, disappointed man, scarcely ever speaking, rarely voting, and manifesting clearly his discontent with his position. But he still retained his office, and by doing so he fatally impaired his influence with his countrymen.

A great change was now passing over the spirit of Ireland. In spite of the augmentation of the forces which was ruining the finances of Ireland, the country was almost destitute of troops, and in the spring of 1778 France had allied herself with the revolted colonies. Privateers soon began to hover around the Irish coast, and fears of invasion, or at least of a French predatory descent, became very acute. Protection was urgently needed, but the Government were compelled to acknowledge that they had neither troops nor money to

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furnish it. The Mayor of Belfast called upon the Government to place a garrison in that town at a time when there was reason to believe that a French descent was impending, and was informed that half a troop of dismounted cavalry and half a troop of invalids were all that could be spared to defend the commercial capital of Ulster.

Then arose one of those movements of enthusiasm that occur two or three times in the history of a nation. The cry to arms passed through the land, and was speedily responded to. Beginning among the sturdy Protestants of the north, the movement soon spread, though in a less degree, to other parts of the island, and all along the coast associations for self-defence were formed under the guidance of the leading gentry. Nearly all the gentry of Ireland threw themselves into the movement, and great subscriptions were made to purchase arms and accoutrements. The Catholics were not yet enrolled, but they showed warm sympathy with the movement and subscribed liberally towards its expense. From Howth to Connemara, from the Giant's Causeway to Cape Clear, the spirit of enthusiasm had passed, and the creation of an army had begun. The military authorities, who could not defend the country, could not refuse to arm those who had risen to supply their place. In a few weeks more than 40,000 men had assembled, disciplined and appointed as a regular army, fired by the strongest enthusiasm, and moving as a single man. They rose to defend their country from the invasion of a foreign army, but it soon became evident that they were determined to demand free trade for their own people and the same constitutional rights as their fellow subjects in England. In the words of one of their resolutions, 'they knew their duty to their Sovereign, and they were loyal; they

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knew their duty to themselves, and they were resolved to be free.' They were guided by the chastened wisdom, the unquestioned patriotism, the ready tact of Charlemont. Flood was conspicuous among their colonels, and though his reputation was much injured by his ministerial career, he still carried with him the memory of his past achievements and the splendour of his yet unfading intellect; and there, too, was he before whose genius all other Irishmen had begun to pale—the patriot of unsullied purity—the statesman who could fire a nation by his enthusiasm, and restrain it by his wisdom—the orator whose burning sentences became the very proverbs of freedom—the gifted, the high-minded Henry Grattan.

It was a moment of supreme danger for the Empire. The energies of England were taxed to the utmost by the war, and there seemed but little doubt that the volunteers, supported by the people, could for a time at least have wrested Ireland from her grasp. A nation unhabituated to freedom, and exasperated by many grievances, had suddenly acquired this power. Could its leaders restrain it within the limits of moderation? Or, if it was in their power, was it in their will?

The voice of the volunteers soon spoke in no equivocal terms on Irish politics. They resolved that 'Citizens, by learning the use of arms, forfeit none of their civil rights;' and they formed themselves into a regular Convention, with delegates and organisation, for the purpose of discussing the condition of the country. Their denunciations of the commercial and legislative restrictions grew louder and louder; and two cannons were shown labelled with the inscription 'Free Trade or this!'

The restrictions on trade were made the special objects of attack. I have already described the manner

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in which—with the exception of the linen trade—every important branch of Irish commerce and manufacture was crippled and ruined by law, and very few measures of relief had been carried during the first three-quarters of the eighteenth century. Some additional encouragement had indeed been given to Irish linen. Several temporary Acts were passed permitting Irish cattle, salted provisions, and tallow to enter England, and in 1765 Ireland was allowed to receive iron and timber direct from the colonies, but the more important disabilities remained unchanged. In 1775, however, a strong movement for free trade arose in Ireland, which fully triumphed under the influence of the volunteers in 1779. In the first of these years Irish vessels were admitted to the fisheries of Newfoundland and Greenland. In 1778 several small relaxations were made in the prohibitory laws which excluded Ireland from the colonial trade. In the beginning of 1779 an attempt was made to allay the Irish cry for the repeal of all commercial disabilities by granting new bounties to linen and to hemp, and by permitting the cultivation of tobacco in Ireland.

The time, however, for such compromises had passed, and on both sides of the Channel public feeling ran dangerously high. The English manufacturers, and especially the towns of Manchester and Glasgow, were bitterly opposed to any measure of free trade, and their opposition hampered the very liberal tendencies of Lord North. The Irish were in arms, and they demanded nothing less than to be placed on the same footing with the English. Numerous meetings were held, and resolutions adopted, pledging the people neither to import nor consume any article of English manufacture till the commercial restrictions were removed; and when Parliament met in October 1779,

Grattan moved an amendment to the Address, concluding with a requisition for free export, and it soon became evident that there was a revolt in the ranks of the Government. The Prime Serjeant, Hussey Burgh, moved an amendment slightly differing in its terms from that of Grattan, but concluding with a demand for 'free export and import.' Flood, who was still a minister, then rose and suggested that the expression 'free trade' should be employed, and spoke in favour of the amendment, which was carried in that form, the great body of the country gentlemen supporting it. A vote of thanks was unanimously passed to the volunteers; the two Houses then went in a body to present their address to the Lord Lieutenant, and the volunteers lined the road and presented arms to them as they passed.

The reply to the address was studiously vague, but a spirit was now aroused in the country with which it would plainly be most dangerous to palter. Meetings of freeholders and meetings of volunteers were everywhere held, demanding free trade and calling on the House of Commons to vote the supplies only for six months. The House showed itself perfectly willing to pursue this path. A resolution was carried against the Government declaring the inexpediency of granting at this time new taxes, and the Government were again defeated on a motion granting the appropriated duties for six months only. Burgh, in a speech which was long remembered as a masterpiece of eloquence, described the extreme danger of the situation and the absolute necessity of speedy and ample concessions. 'Talk not to me,' he said, 'of peace; it is not peace but smothered war. England has sown her laws in dragons' teeth and they have sprung up in armed men.' Nearly at the same time a Bill abolishing the

sacramental test, which was still imposed on the Irish Protestant Dissenters, was carried through Parliament with a general concurrence.

Burgh resigned his office almost immediately after his great speech, but the Lord Lieutenant, though resenting bitterly his revolt, concurred fully with his estimate of the danger of the situation. Lord North had already shown himself more liberal on commercial questions than other English ministers, but he had been overborne by the demonstrations which had taken place in the chief manufacturing towns of England. The question, however, had now become much more pressing. The attitude of the volunteers and the urgent warnings of the Irish Government prevailed, and a series of English measures were carried which removed the chief grievances of which the Irish complained. The Acts prohibiting them from exporting their woollen and glass manufactures were repealed, and the whole colonial trade was thrown open to Ireland, on the sole condition that duties equal to those paid in British ports should be imposed by the Irish Parliament on the exports and imports of Ireland. The Irish were at the same time allowed to import foreign hops, to become members of the Turkey Company, and to carry on a direct trade between Ireland and the Levant sea.

The importance of these measures in her commercial history can scarcely be overrated. They enabled the country for the first time for many generations to develop freely its internal resources, and they were the source of the great growth of prosperity which Ireland subsequently enjoyed. No demand could be more legitimate than that which was now conceded, but, like so many Irish demands, it was conceded reluctantly and to a menace of force, and it left an evil example behind it,

The events that have been described rendered the position of Flood as minister still more irksome than it had been, and at last he took the step which it was plainly his duty to have taken before—threw up his office and rejoined his old friends. The ministers marked their displeasure at his conduct by dismissing him from the Council, and he never regained his former position in the patriotic party. He found that his long services had been forgotten during his long silence, that the genius of Grattan had obtained a complete ascendancy, and that the questions he had for so many years discussed were taken out of his hands. He felt the change acutely, and it exercised a perceptible influence upon his temper. He seconded a motion of Grattan for substituting a limited for a perpetual Mutiny Act. In 1779 Yelverton brought forward a Bill for the repeal of Poynings' Law; and Flood, while supporting the measure, complained bitterly that 'after a service of twenty years in the study of this particular question' he had been superseded. He added: 'The honourable gentleman is erecting a temple of liberty. I hope that at least I shall be allowed a niche in the fane.' Yelverton retorted by reminding them that by the civil law 'if a man should separate from his wife, desert, and abandon her for seven years, another might then take her and give her his protection.'

I pass over the events that immediately followed the discussions of the volunteers, and the ultimate triumph of Irish independence, as belonging more especially to the life of Grattan. The next prominent transaction in which Flood appears was the fatal controversy on the subject of Simple Repeal. How far in this matter he was actuated by personal motives, and how far by pure patriotism, it is impossible to determine. This much may be said in his favour—that he



supported every step of his policy by specious if not by conclusive arguments, and that he carried with him a large section of the intellect of the country. The broad question on which he differed from Grattan was the advisability of continuing the Volunteer Convention. Grattan wished Ireland to subside into its normal condition as soon as the independence of the Parliament had been declared; he felt the extreme danger of having the representatives of an armed force organised like an independent Parliament, and overawing all other authority in the land. He considered that parliamentary reforms should emanate from Parliament alone, and should be the result of no coercion except that of public opinion. Flood, on the other hand, perceived that Ireland was in a position, with reference to England, such as she might never occupy again; he believed that by continuing the Convention a little longer, guarantees of Irish independence might be obtained which it would be impossible afterwards to overthrow; and that Parliament might be so reformed as to be made completely subject to public opinion, and therefore completely above the danger of ministerial intrigue. He foresaw what Grattan at that time does not appear to have foreseen, that the English ministers would never cordially accept the new position of Ireland, and that the existing borough system gave them every facility for keeping its Parliament in a state of permanent debility and subservience, and if necessary of some day putting an end to its existence.

The Simple Repeal controversy may be thus shortly stated: English statesmen maintained, and Irish Liberals, from Molyneux to Grattan, denied, that Poyning's Law made the Irish Parliament entirely and legitimately subservient to English control, and that the British Parliament had full authority to bind Ire-

land by its laws. The Parliament of England fixed the sense by a Declaratory Act, asserting the dependence of that of Ireland, and it was on these two enactments that its authority in Ireland rested. In 1782 the Irish Parliament asserted its own independence, and the English Parliament repealed its Declaratory Act. The question at issue was whether this was sufficient, or whether an express renunciation should be exacted from England.

Grattan argued that the principle of dependence was embodied in the Declaratory Act, and therefore that its repeal was a resignation of the pretended right; that when a man of honour affirms that he possesses a certain power, and afterwards solemnly retracts his declaration, it is equivalent to a distinct disavowal, and that the same laws of honour apply to nations and to individuals; that to require an express renunciation from England after what she had done would be to exhibit a distrustful and an overbearing spirit, and would keep alive the ill-feeling between the two countries which it was most important to allay; that it would also stultify the Irish National Party, for it would imply that England actually possessed the right she was called upon to renounce.

To these reasonings it was replied that the declaratory law did not make a right, and that therefore its repeal could not unmake it; that though the Irish maintained that England had never possessed the right in question, the English Parliament had asserted its authority, and the repeal of the Declaratory Act was not necessarily anything more than the withdrawal of that assertion as a matter of expediency for the present; that an express renunciation would be a charter of Irish liberties such as no legal quibble could evade; and that if England had no desire to reassert her claim she could

have no objection to make it. It was added that the history of English dealings with Ireland showed plainly how necessary it was to leave no loophole or possibility of encroachment. It was a peculiarity of the Irish question that the independence of the Irish Parliament was bitterly disliked in England, on different grounds, by the most opposite parties. The high prerogative party objected to it as a measure of political emancipation, and as likely to prove some day incompatible with the connection. The trading classes, who constituted the chief strength of the Whig Party, were equally opposed to it through their jealousy of Irish trade.

In addition to these general considerations, several circumstances had occurred in England which greatly disturbed the public mind. Lord Abingdon, in the English House of Lords, had drawn a distinction between a right to internal and a right to external legislation, and had argued that, while England had relinquished the former, she had retained the latter, and Fox had used language much to the same effect. Lord Beauchamp had written a pamphlet maintaining that simple repeal unaccompanied by a renunciation was insufficient. An English law with reference to the importation of sugar from St. Domingo had been drawn up in terms that seemed applicable to Ireland, and Lord Mansfield had decided an old Irish law case.

The Simple Repeal question was not started by Flood, but it gained its importance chiefly from his adhesion to the party who were yet unsatisfied. He brought forward their arguments with his usual force, and concluded his speech with an appeal of great solemnity, which bears every mark of earnest feeling. 'Were the voice,' he said, 'with which I now utter this the last effort of expiring nature; were the accent which conveys it to you the breath that was to waft me to that

grave to which we all tend, and to which my footsteps rapidly accelerate, I would go on, I would make my exit by a loud demand for your rights; and I call upon the God of truth and liberty, who has so often favoured you, and who has of late looked down upon you with such a peculiar grace and glory of protection, to continue to you His inspirings, to crown you with the spirit of His completion, and to assist you against the errors of those that are honest, as well as against the machinations of those that are not.' Most of the volunteers, headed by the lawyer corps, whose opinion on such a question naturally carried great weight, supported Flood, and the popularity of Grattan in the country waned as rapidly as it had risen. It became customary to say that nothing had really been gained until the formal renunciation had been made; and at last Fox brought forward in England the required Renunciatory Act.

It was in the course of these discussions that the famous collision between Flood and Grattan took place. It had been for some time evident to close observers that it must come sooner or later. For several years the friendship between them had been growing colder and colder, and giving way to feelings of hostility. Flood felt keenly the manner in which he had been superseded as leader of the National Party. He could not reconcile himself to occupying a second place to a man so much younger than himself, after having been for so long a period the most conspicuous character in the country. The particular subject of the independence of Parliament he had brought forward again and again when Grattan was a mere boy, and it seemed to him hard that another should reap the glory of his long and thankless labour. He had sat in Parliament for sixteen years before Grattan had entered it. He

had borne the brunt of the battle at a time when the prospects of the cause seemed hopeless; and if less brilliant than his rival, he was deemed by most men fully his equal in solid capacity, and greatly his superior in knowledge and experience.

Grattan, on the other hand, regarded Flood's adhesion to the Harcourt Administration and his conduct on the American question as acts of apostasy, and his agitation of Simple Repeal as a struggle for a personal triumph at the expense of the interests of the country. He dreaded the permanence of the Volunteer Convention, the increase of ill-feeling between the two countries, and a needless and dangerous agitation of the public mind. Ill-health and the position he had so long held had given Flood a somewhat authoritative and petulant tone, which contrasted remarkably with his urbanity in private life; and Grattan, on his side, was embittered by the sudden decay of his popularity, and by several slight and not very successful conflicts with his rival.

The position of Flood during these proceedings was a very ambiguous one, and it is difficult to speak with real certainty of the motives that actuated him. He seemed determined that the controversy between England and Ireland should not terminate, and he brought forward question after question of the most dangerous description. He was one of the small minority who objected to the address moved by Grattan on May 27, 1782, declaring that all constitutional questions between the two nations were at an end. He opposed the formation of certain 'fencible regiments,' which would have been much like the militia he had always advocated, because they would tend to do away with the necessity for the volunteers, and he again and again brought forward or supported measures for military

retrenchment, reducing the Irish army below the 15,000 men provided under Lord Townshend. Such a measure, though it had been supported by Grattan at an earlier date, seemed to him most impolitic, dangerous, and ungrateful immediately after the concession of full independence by the British Government, and the question of Simple Repeal stirred up all the jealousies which a few months before seemed likely altogether to subside.

Portland and Temple, who held in succession the viceroyalty at this critical period, both formed a very unfavourable impression of the character of Flood, though they both rated very high his ability and his influence. 'His ambition,' Portland wrote to Shelburne, 'is so immeasurable that no dependence can be placed upon any engagement he may be induced to form.' Temple urged that the most strenuous opposition should be given to the policy of Flood, as the slightest concession would only increase his demands; he spoke of 'the universal dislike that the nobility and persons of property bear to him,' and he described him as 'the only person in his party whom any contingency of circumstances might make it necessary for us to buy,' but he states that Flood's doctrines were daily becoming more popular and his ascendancy over the volunteers more formidable. He notices the support which Flood's doctrine received from Belfast; he declared that the Presbyterians in the north of Ireland were 'totally republican and averse to English government,' and the whole situation was described in his confidential letters as almost desperate. 'The representations of perfect content and pacification so much heard in England are treacherously and insidiously false.' 'The country is too wild to act from reflection, and till you can oppose Parliament effectually to the volunteers nothing can be done.' 'Those to whom the

people look up with confidence are not the Parliament, but a body of armed men composed chiefly of the middling and lower orders, influenced by no one, but leading those who affect to guide them.' 'There is hardly a magistrate who will enforce or a man who will obey any law to which he objects.' 'It is my unalterable opinion that the concession is but the beginning of a scene which will close for ever the account between the two kingdoms.'

Temple was not a man of great ability or foresight, and he had but a very slight experience of Irish affairs. It is impossible, however, to deny the great danger of the situation, and difficult to acquit Flood of having been largely actuated by personal motives. No man was more attached to him than Charlemont, but he clearly recognised the strong personal element in Flood's later policy. 'Ambition,' he says, 'though tempered by many amiable and estimable qualities, was ever his ruling passion.' He was always 'suspicious, intractable, too fond of pre-eminence.' He had expected when leaving office under Lord Harcourt to find himself at the head of his party, but he found himself wholly displaced by Grattan, and his new policy seemed intended to regain his popularity. Portland hoped to restore him to the side of the Government by offering to replace him in the Privy Council without office, but the negotiation was clumsily conducted and the offer was scornfully rejected. When Northington, succeeding Temple, became Viceroy in the brief Coalition Ministry, new overtures were made unofficially to Flood through Edward Malone and through Markham, the Archbishop of York, and it was clearly intimated to him that he might have a leading place in the new Administration.

In estimating his true character it must be noticed

that he entirely refused these overtures. Charlemont, who knew him well, has said of him that 'avarice made no part of his character.' Nor is there any evidence that he ever asked for or desired a peerage, which was the usual reward of a wealthy politician who was negotiating with Governments. Nothing in the Irish history of the latter half of the century is more conspicuous than the lavishness with which peerages were then granted as a means of parliamentary management. It was stated that between 1762 and 1783 inclusive, thirty-three barons, sixteen viscounts, and twenty-four earls had been added to the Irish peerage. But Flood, though from his fortune and political position he might most easily have attained this dignity, never aspired to it. The ambition of power, which was largely patriotic but also in some measure personal, was his guiding influence, and the question of Simple Repeal and the Renunciation Act which had been granted by England, and which was regarded as a confirmation of the justice of his view, had placed him once more in a position of great power and wide, though certainly not unchallenged, popularity. >

Under these circumstances it needed but little to produce an explosion, and that little was supplied by a discourteous and unfair allusion to Flood's illness which escaped from Grattan in the heat of the debate. The question before the House was the necessity of reducing the Irish army, to which Grattan strongly objected and which Flood vehemently advocated. Flood rose indignantly, and, after a few words of preface, launched into a fierce diatribe against his opponent. His task was a difficult one, for few men presented a more unassailable character. Invective, however, of the most extravagant description was the custom of the time, and invective between good and



great men is necessarily unjust. He dwelt with bitter emphasis on the grant the Parliament had made to Grattan. He described him as 'that mendicant patriot who was bought by his country, and sold that country for prompt payment;' and he dilated with the keenest sarcasm upon the decline of his popularity. He concluded, in a somewhat exultant tone: 'Permit me to say that if the honourable gentleman often provokes such contests as this, he will have but little to boast of at the end of the session.' Grattan, however, was not unprepared. He had long foreseen the collision, and had embodied all his angry feelings in one elaborate speech. Employing the common artifice of an imaginary character, he painted the whole career of his opponent in the blackest colours, condensed in a few masterly sentences all the charges that had ever been brought against him, and sat down, having delivered an invective which, for concentrated and crushing power, but also for outrageous violence, is almost or altogether unrivalled in modern oratory.

Thus terminated the friendship between two men who had done more than any who were then living for their country, who had known each other for twenty years, and whose lives are imperishably associated in history. Flood afterwards presided at a meeting of the volunteers, where a resolution complimentary to Grattan was passed; Grattan, in his pamphlet on the Union, and more than once in private conversation, gave noble testimony to the greatness of Flood; but they were never reconciled, and their cordial co-operation was henceforth almost an impossibility.

The dissension between the Parliament and the volunteers had now become very marked, and it was evident that there was at least one important man among the latter who desired open war with England. It is

curious that he should have been by birth an Englishman, and by position a bishop. The Earl of Bristol and Bishop of Derry was son of that Lord Hervey who was long remembered only as the object of the fiercest of all the satires of Pope, but who was revealed to a later generation in altogether a new light, by the publication of those masterly memoirs in which he had described the Court and much of the State policy of George II. The character of the Bishop has been somewhat differently painted, but its chief ingredients are sufficiently evident, whatever controversy there may be about the proportions in which they were mixed. He appears to have been a man of respectable learning and of real public spirit. He expended large sums on public works of undoubted utility; his ecclesiastical patronage is said to have been excellently administered, and he was an advocate of the abolition of all religious disqualifications in politics; but he was at the same time utterly destitute of the distinctive virtues and probably also of the beliefs of a clergyman, and he was one of the most dangerous politicians of his time. Vain, impetuous, and delighting in display; with an insatiable appetite for popularity, and utterly reckless about the consequences of his acts, he exhibited, though an English peer and an Irish bishop, all the characteristics of the most irresponsible adventurer. Under other circumstances he might have been capable of the policy of an Alberoni. In Ireland, for a short time, he rode upon the crest of the wave; and if he had obtained the control he aspired to over the volunteer movement, he would probably have headed a civil war. But though a man of indisputable courage, and of considerable popular talents, he had neither the caution of a great rebel nor the settled principles of a great statesman. His habits were extremely con-

vivial; he talked with reckless folly to his friends, and even to British officers, of the appeal to arms which he meditated; and he exhibited a passion for ostentation which led men, probably with good reason, to question his sanity. 'He appeared always,' says Barrington, 'dressed with peculiar care and neatness, generally entirely in purple, and he wore diamond knee and shoe buckles; but what I most observed was, that he wore white gloves with gold fringe round the wrists, and large gold tassels hanging from them.' The ostentation he manifested in his dress he displayed in every part of his public life. A troop of horse, commanded by his nephew, used to accompany him when he went out, and to mount guard at his door. On one occasion he drove in royal state to a great meeting which was held at the Rotunda, escorted by a body of the volunteers, who sounded their trumpets as they passed the Parliament house, much to the astonishment of the assembled members.

Fortunately, however, the influence of the Bishop with the volunteers, though very great, was not absolute. He desired to become their president, but, though he had many partisans, Lord Charlemont was elected to the place; and in the Volunteer Convention, which had now assembled, the practised oratory of Flood obtained a complete ascendancy. At the same time, it is not surprising that the proceedings of the volunteers should have created much alarm and many wishes for the dissolution of the Convention. But for this measure Flood was not prepared. He maintained that two great dangers had menaced the independence of Parliament, that it might be evaded by a legal quibble, and that it might be betrayed by the corruption of its members. By obtaining from England a distinct renunciation of all supremacy he had provided effec-

tually against the first of these dangers. By reforming the Parliament, he sought to guard against the latter. But, in order that a Reform Bill should be brought forward with any chance of success, he believed it to be essential that it should be supported by all the threatening weight of the Volunteer Convention.

Had he succeeded in carrying the reform he meditated, the conditions of Irish Government would have been wholly changed. Whether a democratic Protestant Parliament such as Flood desired would have worked harmoniously with the Government of England—whether it would have the power or the wish to deal liberally with the great Catholic questions that would inevitably arise—may, indeed, be gravely doubted. But we should at least have been spared the long night of corruption that overcast the splendour of Irish liberty. It is possible that the blood of 1798 might not have flowed. If a Legislative Union had proved inevitable it would have had the sanction of free constituencies, and it might have been remembered only with gratitude or with content.

The Reform Bill was drawn up by Flood, and was first submitted to the Volunteer Convention for their sanction. It was discussed there at great length and with much detail, and immediately after the Convention had agreed to it Flood went down to the House of Commons to introduce it, while the Convention resolved to continue its sittings till Parliament had decided the question. The Bill was thus avowedly the product of an armed body, and it was clearly upon the intimidation of this body that its supporters relied for their success. In one respect it was glaringly defective. It proposed to extend the franchise, but it gave no political power to the Catholics. On this point both Flood and Charlemont were strenuously opposed to

Grattan. It was their profound conviction that in the peculiar situation of Ireland it was essential to the healthy working of local government and to the security of property that political power should rest entirely in the hands of the Protestants. They were prepared to extend to the Catholics full religious liberties and every economical privilege which did not carry with it political power, but they maintained that arms and votes must be rigidly withheld. Charlemont predicted that at least a century must pass before the mass of the Irish Catholics could be so assimilated by education to their fellow-countrymen that they might be safely entrusted with the rights of citizens. Flood strongly maintained that it was of the highest possible importance that the question of Catholic franchise should not even be raised. In language which has the accent of the most deep-felt conviction, he urged that the first condition of the existence of an independent Constitution in Ireland was that it should rest on an exclusively Protestant basis, and that a total convulsion must follow if the vast, anarchical, Catholic element was admitted to equal powers with the Protestants. The laws that followed the Revolution, he contended, 'were not laws of persecution but of political necessity;' though the time had come for bestowing the amplest measure of religious and personal liberty, it was still true that, if the Constitution of Ireland was to be preserved and to be reformed, it could only be done on the condition of excluding the Catholics from all power in the State; and when, in 1782, a measure had been brought forward to enable Catholics to purchase estates, he strongly supported an amendment excepting all borough rights by which members might be returned to Parliament.

With this grave exception, the volunteer Reform

Bill was a comprehensive and also a moderate and reasonable one, and would have effectually cured the great evils of the Legislature. It proposed to open the close boroughs by giving votes to all Protestant forty-shilling freeholders, and to leaseholders of thirty-one years, of which fifteen were unexpired. It provided that in the case of decayed boroughs the franchise should be extended to the adjoining parishes; that pensioners who held their pensions during pleasure should be altogether excluded from Parliament; that those who accepted a pension for life or a Government place should vacate their seats; that each member should take an oath that he had not been guilty of bribery at his election; and that the duration of Parliament should be limited to three years.

It was in truth a night of momentous importance to the country when Flood brought forward in Parliament the volunteer Reform Bill, and the crowded benches and the anxious faces that surrounded him showed how fully the magnitude of the struggle was appreciated. The elation of recovered popularity and the proud consciousness of the grandeur of his position dispelled the clouds that had so long hung over his mind, and imparted a glow to his eloquence worthy of his brightest days. He had too much tact even to mention the volunteers in his opening speech; but the uniform he wore, the fire of his eye, and the almost regal majesty of his tone and of his gesture reminded all who heard him of the source of his inspiration. He was opposed by Yelverton, the Attorney-General. Yelverton was at all times a powerful speaker, but on this night he seems to have made his greatest effort. He called upon the House to reject the Bill without even examining its intrinsic merits, as coming from the emissaries of an armed body; he denounced it as an

insult and a menace, as a manifest infringement of the privileges of Parliament; and he appealed to all parties to rally round the liberties of their country, so lately rescued from English domination, and now threatened by a military council. Flood, in his reply, rested—perhaps rather disingenuously—on his not having spoken of the volunteers. He had not mentioned them, but if they were attacked he was prepared to support them; and then he digressed, with the adroitness of a skilful debater, into their defence. He reminded his hearers how much they owed to that body; how the volunteers had emancipated their trade and struck off their chains; how absurd, how ungrateful it would be to assail their deliverers as enemies, and to brand them as hostile to liberty. Yet it was not for the volunteers that he asked reform; he would rather place the question on its own merits. ‘We come to you,’ he said, ‘as members of this House; in that capacity we present you with a Reform Bill. Will you receive it from us?’

He was, however, but feebly supported and strongly opposed. Many members dreaded reform on personal grounds, and were doubtless glad of a plausible pretext for opposing it. Others believed that the Convention was the most pressing danger. Lord Charlemont, the leader of the volunteers, who, though not a member, had a great influence in the Lower House, was timid, vacillating, and perplexed. The Government exerted all its influence against Flood, and a majority, actuated by various motives, rejected the Bill. The numbers were 158 to 49, and it is said that more than half the majority were placemen. A resolution to the effect that the dignity of the House required asserting, which was tantamount to a censure of the volunteers, was then moved and carried. Grattan voted with Flood

on the reform question, and against him on the subsequent resolution. Lord Charlemont adjourned the Convention *sine die*, and its members separated with an alacrity and a submission that furnished the most eloquent refutation of the charges of their opponents. Before separating, Flood moved and carried an address from the volunteer delegates to the King expressive of their duty and loyalty, recounting their services in protecting the kingdom when his Majesty's forces were inadequate to the task, and in maintaining the laws and police more perfectly than in any other period within the memory of man, and imploring his Majesty 'that their humble wish to have certain manifest perversions of the parliamentary representation of this kingdom remedied by the Legislature in some reasonable degree might not be imputed to any spirit of innovation in them, but to a sober and laudable desire to uphold the Constitution . . . and to perpetuate the cordial union of both kingdoms.'

The conduct of Flood in this transaction has given rise to much controversy. There can be no question that the existence of an assembly consisting of the representatives of a powerful military force, convened for the purpose of discussing political questions, was extremely menacing, both to the Parliament and the connection. If the Bishop of Derry had obtained the presidency matters would probably have been pushed to a rebellion. This period was perhaps the only one in Irish history when the connection between the two countries might very possibly have been dissolved, and when the dissolution would not have at once involved Ireland in anarchy or civil war. In the prostrate condition to which England had been reduced it is extremely doubtful whether she could have resisted an organised army, which rose at last to more than 100,000



men, which was commanded by the men of most property and influence in the country, and was supported by the enthusiasm of the nation. Such an organisation seemed more powerful than that which had just wrested the colonies from her grasp. Had the severance been effected, Ireland possessed a greater amount of legislative talent than at any former period, and it was believed that her newly emancipated Parliament only needed a reform to become an efficient organ of national representation. There was then no serious conflict of classes, and the Catholic question, though it caused division among politicians, was not yet a source of pressing danger to the country. The Catholics had neither education, leaders, nor ambition. They were perfectly peaceful, and indeed quiescent. The most obnoxious of the penal laws had already been repealed. The volunteers had passed a resolution approving of that repeal. The rising school of politicians were in favour of gradually granting political power to the Catholics, and the cause had no more unhesitating supporter than the Bishop of Derry.

Flood, however, does not appear to have had any desire to produce rebellion,<sup>1</sup> and he was no friend of Catholic Emancipation. His object was to overawe the Parliament by the menace of military force, in order to induce it to reform itself. It is sufficiently manifest that such an attempt was extremely dangerous and unconstitutional, but he held it to be a desperate remedy applied to a desperate disease. It was a matter of life or death to the Irish Constitution that the system of corruption and rotten boroughs which gave the Cas-

<sup>1</sup> See, however, on the other side, a curious traditional anecdote related by O'Connell, on the authority of Bartholo-

mew Hoare, a friend of Flood, and preserved in O'Neill Daunt's *Ireland and Her Agitators*, pp. 4, 5.

tle a sure and overwhelming majority should be ended, and, as a great majority of the members had a personal interest in its permanence, some degree of intimidation was absolutely necessary. Even the British Reform Bill of 1832 would never have been passed if the country had been tranquil. But the abuses of the unreformed British Parliament, great as they were, were almost insignificant compared with those of the Parliament in Dublin. It was computed that out of the 300 members, 200 sat for pocket boroughs, that 124 members were nominated by 53 peers, and 91 others by 52 commoners.

corrupt  
Parliament

After the experience of the last few months the policy of the Convention was almost inevitable. There was, no doubt, a considerable difference between the display of force to carry free trade and legislative independence in accordance with the wishes of Parliament, and the display of a similar force to overawe the Parliament; but the necessity of a Reform Bill was urgent, and if Charlemont, Grattan, and Flood had been cordially united, it would probably have been forced through Parliament.

Whether, however, the volunteers, flushed with a new conquest, would have consented to disband may reasonably be doubted. Fox, in a very earnest letter, urging the Irish Government to resist the volunteer demand to the uttermost, said, 'The question is not whether this or that measure shall take place, but whether the Constitution of Ireland, which Irish patriots are so proud of having established, shall exist, or whether the Government shall be as purely military as ever it was under the Prætorian bands.' The defensive utility of the volunteers had terminated with the peace, and their desire of encroaching on the political sphere had grown.

I venture, however, to think that the probabilities were, on the whole, in favour of the peaceful dispersion of the force when its work was accomplished. The French Revolution, which has given so violent and democratic a tendency to popular movements, had not yet taken place. The volunteers were still guided by the rank and property of the country, and these were amply represented in the Convention. Above all, the moderation of the assembly in selecting Charlemont for its head, and in dispersing peacefully after its defeat, may be taken as a sufficient evidence of the patriotism of its members.<sup>1</sup>

All the leading men, however, were somewhat below the occasion. Grattan was not a member of the Convention. He would not co-operate with Flood, and he utterly disapproved of the continuance of the Convention, and of all attempts to overawe the Legislature. Charlemont remained at the head of the volunteers chiefly in order to moderate them, and his opinion on

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<sup>1</sup> In his speech on the Union Lord Clare summed up his opinion in these remarkable words: 'On the old Irish volunteers I desire to be understood not to convey anything like a censure. Their conduct will remain a problem in history; for without the shadow of military control, to their immortal honour it is known that, from their first levy till they disbanded themselves no act of violence or outrage was charged against them, and they certainly did on every occasion when their services were required exert themselves with effect to maintain the internal peace of the country. The

gentlemen of Ireland were all in their ranks and maintained a decided influence upon them. But I shall never cease to think that the appeals made to that army by the angry politicians of that day were dangerous and ill-judged in the extreme, and that they established a precedent for rebellion which has since been followed up with full success.' Jeremy Bentham, as I have elsewhere noticed, has expressed a strong opinion in favour of the policy of Flood on this occasion, and the same view has lately been taken by Mr. Dunlop in his *Life of Grattan*.

the question at issue was, in reality, little different from that of Grattan. The Bishop of Derry was violent, vain, and foolish. Flood was but too open to the imputation of having stirred up the question of simple repeal through envy at the triumph of Grattan, and of aggrandising the power of the Convention, in which he was almost supreme, through jealousy of Parliament, in which his influence had diminished. No step whatever appears to have been taken to obtain petitions or demonstrations to support the Bill, and at the very time when Flood was pushing the country to the verge of a civil war, he was damping the enthusiasm of the Catholics by carefully excluding them from his scheme of reform.

The effects of this episode upon the country were very injurious. Violent riots broke out in Dublin, and the mob forced its way into the Parliament House. The Parliament seemed to show some spirit in refusing even to entertain a Bill emanating from a military force, but, as it refused with equal pertinacity to yield to subsequent Reform Bills which were brought forward without military assistance, and with the support of petitions from twenty-six counties, it neither received nor deserved credit. The Volunteer Convention dissolved itself; but the volunteers themselves, with diminished importance, and under the guidance of inferior men, continued for many years in a divided and broken state, and the United Irishmen rose out of their embers.

c. 1783

The Bishop who had occupied so prominent a place in the movement afterwards retired, on the plea of ill-health, to Italy, where he lived for many years a wild and scandalous life, retaining the emoluments but utterly neglecting the duties of his bishopric, scoffing openly at religion, and adopting without disguise the

lax moral habits of Neapolitan society. His wealth, his good-nature, his munificent patronage of art,<sup>1</sup> and his brilliant social qualities seem to have made him popular, and in his old age he was a lover of Lady Hamilton, to whom he was accustomed to write in a strain of most unepiscopal fervor. He fell into the hands of the French in 1799, and was imprisoned at Milan for eighteen months. His last appearance in Irish politics is a letter written by him in 1799, authorising Lord Abercorn to place his name on an address in favour of the Legislative Union. He died near Rome in 1803.<sup>2</sup>

It was on November 28, 1783, that Flood introduced the Volunteer Reform Bill into the Irish House of Commons. In the preceding month he had already made arrangements with the Duke of Chandos for the purchase of a seat for Winchester in the British House of Commons. It was one of the curious anomalies of the Constitution that it was possible for a man to be simultaneously member of the two Parliaments, and during the last seven years of his political life Flood held this position. His enemies imagined that one of

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<sup>1</sup> We have an amusing illustration of his art taste in an engraving of one of the most indecent of the pictures of Albano, 'Actæon discovering Diana and her Nymphs just emerging from the bath,' which is dedicated to 'the Earl of Bristol and Lord Bishop of Derry;' underneath are the Bishop's arms surmounted by the mitre, and a little below the mitre is the Bishop's motto — 'Je ne l'oublierai jamais.'

<sup>2</sup> There is much curious information about the latter years

of this eccentric Bishop in the *Memoirs of Lady Hamilton*; in those of the Comtesse de Lichtenau, and in the personal *Memoirs of Pryse Lockhart Gordon*, i. 1721-77. Mr. Clason Porter has collected much information about him in a paper called 'Frederick Augustus Hervey,' reprinted from the *Belfast Northern Whig*. See, too, the chapter on the subject by Mr. Litton Falkiner, in his admirable *Studies on Irish History*.

the motives which made him endeavour to force by intimidation the reform of the Irish Parliament was that he might come into the British House as a natural leader on the question of reform. However this may be, it cannot be said that in either country Flood's later years added to his reputation. He introduced in 1784 the Reform Bill of the preceding year into the Irish Parliament. The Volunteer Convention was no longer sitting, and addresses from all over the country poured in in favour of the Bill. Flood seems to have introduced it with great eloquence, and also with great moderation, contending, however, that it was contrary to every principle of right and justice that individuals should be permitted to send into the House two, four, or six members, and 'to make a traffic of venal boroughs as if they were household utensils.' The Bill was not thrown out as in the previous year in its first stage. It was debated at great length and with much ability, and few of the debates in the Irish House are more instructive to a student of Irish parliamentary history, but at last, between three and four on a Sunday morning, the House by a majority of seventy-four refused to commit it. It found eighty-five supporters.

Flood did not after this event intervene frequently in Irish debates, but his occasional appearances were almost uniformly in hostility to the Government. He took a considerable part in the movement for protective duties on Irish industries. It was a question which obtained considerable magnitude on account of a severe period of commercial depression in 1783 and 1784, but it was also very dangerous, as it was likely to lead to a war of tariffs with England and a revival of commercial jealousy between the two countries. He in the same spirit opposed Pitt's commercial propositions in 1785, not merely in the amended form in which they were ultimately de-

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feated in Ireland, but even in their first form which was accepted by Grattan and most of his friends. From first to last he consistently contended that Irish trade could only flourish if largely supported by bounties and protective laws, and that the Irish Parliament should never relinquish or restrict its powers of imposing such laws. He again more than once dwelt upon his old subjects of the necessity of retrenchment, and especially of military retrenchment in Ireland; he spoke at great length and with much learning on a legal question of the rights of the Court of King's Bench which appeared to have been strained by an undue extension of the doctrine of contempt of Court; and he again urged the necessity for parliamentary reform. He never, however, appears to have modified his belief that the strictly Protestant character of the Irish Constitution in Church and State must be jealously maintained, and that no Catholic element should be admitted to power. A small number of able and independent men in the Irish Parliament always looked up to him as their leader, and on the Catholic question his views were substantially identical with those of John Foster, one of the ablest Irishmen of his day. But his position was becoming more and more isolated. The maintainers of the existing form of government regarded him as a violent, factious, and dangerous demagogue. The reformers believed that no Irish Reform was feasible or likely to be enduring which did not include the Catholics. After 1786 Flood appears to have no longer attended the Irish Parliament, though he still retained his seat. His name at least no longer appears in its debates.

In the British Parliament also his career was very disappointing. As far back as 1767 he had, through the instrumentality of Lord Charlemont, been engaged in a negotiation for a seat in that House, and he was

at that time an ardent admirer of Lord Chatham. At the close of the Harcourt Administration, as we have already seen, he was anxious to enter the House under the auspices of Lord North and prepared to support the American policy of that statesman. His election for Winchester in 1783 was a mere matter of purchase, for he had given 4,000*l.* for a seat which he only held for a single year.

His failure in the British House is well known. His habits had been already formed for an Irish audience, and, as Grattan said of him, 'he was an oak of the forest too great and too old to be transplanted at fifty.' He was also guilty of extraordinary imprudence. He began by proclaiming openly that he would not identify himself with either of the great parties in Parliament. It was a foolish but also a characteristic step, for he had of late years shown an ever-increasing tendency to play an isolated part. In Ireland this had done much to deprive him of the confidence of all parties, and in England he prejudiced both sides of the House against him, and deprived himself of the support which is of such great consequence to a debater. He spoke first on the India Bill, which ultimately led to the downfall of the Coalition Ministry. He had but just arrived in London, and the subject as he himself acknowledged was one on which he knew very little, but he rose, as a practised speaker often does, in a Parliament with which he is familiar, to make a few remarks in a conversational tone, to detect some flaw in a preceding speaker's argument, or to throw light upon some particular section of the subject, without intending to make an elaborate speech or to review the entire question. Immediately from the lobbies and the coffee-room the members came crowding in, anxious to hear a new speaker of whom great expectations were



entertained. He seems to have thought that it would be disrespectful to those members to sit down at once, so he continued extempore, and soon showed his little knowledge of the subject. When he concluded there was a universal feeling of disappointment. A member named Courtenay rose, and completed his discomfiture by a virulent and satirical attack, which the rules of the House prevented him from answering. It is hardly necessary to say that Courtenay was an Irishman. He confessed afterwards to Lord Byron that he had been actuated by a personal motive.<sup>1</sup>

A few days after his first speech Flood took an occasion of entering into an elaborate eulogy of the Irish volunteers, and deprecating the sending of any greater number of English soldiers to Ireland, and he moved a reduction of the army estimates. In the new Parliament of 1784, after a bitter quarrel with the Duke of Chandos, he was compelled to relinquish his seat for Winchester to a connection of the duke, and as he would neither enrol himself as a follower of Pitt nor of Fox he had some difficulty in finding another seat, but he was returned for Seaford on a petition in 1785. He does not, however, appear to have taken any part in the English debates till the commercial treaty with France, which was carried in 1787. He opposed that treaty in a long and elaborate speech, which is well reported and

<sup>1</sup> Wraxall, speaking of Flood's failure, says: 'The slow, measured, and sententious style of enunciation which characterised his eloquence, however calculated to excite admiration it might be in the senate of the sister kingdom, appeared to English ears cold, stiff, and deficient in some of the best recommendations

to attention.' This passage is very curious, as showing how little the present popular conception of Irish eloquence prevailed in the last century. Phillips states (*Recollections of Curran*, p. 117) that Flood's health was at this time utterly broken, and he attributes it to the dissipation of his youth.

which gives a good idea of his style of speaking. It is undoubtedly the speech of a very able man, who brought to bear on his subject a wide range of historical knowledge, much skill, and ingenuity of reasoning and much felicity of language; but it is pervaded throughout with the chief economical errors which it was the great work of Adam Smith to refute. No one maintained more emphatically that England and France must always be natural enemies—that the benefit of one must necessarily be the disadvantage of the other—that trade between two nations can never be mutually beneficial—that the old mercantile doctrine of the balance of trade should be the foundation of commercial policy—that the great object of the wise statesman should be to acquire for his country as many monopolies as possible, and that this is the real advantage to be derived from the acquisition of colonies. He was on stronger ground when he compared the commercial treaty with France with the abortive commercial treaty with Ireland, and urged that the English manufacturers who had looked with such jealousy on the first should be inexorably opposed to the second. ‘If a commercial treaty with Ireland was thought to be so destructive to the trading interest of this country, what must it be with one that has five times her credit, eight times her population, and forty times her capital?’

Wilberforce, in answering this speech, spoke warmly of its eloquence and power, and in a subsequent altercation with William Grenville, who had reproached him with the part he had taken in the rejection of the Irish commercial propositions in 1785, Flood seems to have brilliantly held his own; but his success on this occasion did not again soon tempt him into the arena. With the exception of a speech against an India Bill in 1788, he never appears to have spoken till March 1790,

when he introduced a Reform Bill in a speech which was much and justly admired,<sup>1</sup> though it advocated a cause which in the existing state of English public opinion was absolutely hopeless.

His proposal was that one hundred members, chosen by county household suffrage, should be added to the House. Burke said that by this speech Flood had retrieved his reputation. Fox declared that the scheme was the best that had been proposed, and Pitt based his opposition to it almost exclusively upon the disturbed state of public affairs. It is to be hoped that these praises in some degree allayed the mortification produced by his previous disappointment. In his reply upon this question he alluded in touching terms to the isolation of his position. 'I appeal to you,' he said, 'whether my conduct has been that of an advocate or an agitator; whether I have often trespassed upon your attention; whether ever except on a question of importance, and whether I then wearied you with ostentation or prolixity. I am as independent in fortune as the honourable member himself. I have no fear but that of doing wrong, nor have I a hope on the subject but that of doing some service before I die. The accident of my situation has not made me a partisan; and I never lamented that situation till now that I find myself as unprotected as I fear the people of England will be on this occasion.' In the dissolution of 1790 he lost his seats in both Parliaments, and he then withdrew to Farmley, his country house in the county of Kilkenny. He is said in his last years to have retired much from society, and his temper became gloomy and morose. He died in December 1791, in his fifty-ninth year.

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<sup>1</sup> I have given an analysis of it in my *Hist. of England*, vi. 50-51 (Cabinet ed.).

When he felt death approaching he requested his attendant to leave the room, and he drew his last breath alone. Faithful to the interests of his country, he left an estate of about 5,000*l.* a year to descend, after the death of his wife, to Dublin University, to be employed in the foundation of an Irish professorship and the acquisition of Irish manuscripts. The will, however, was challenged in the law courts and finally overthrown.

The impression Flood made upon those who had known him in the earlier part of his Irish career was far deeper than that which he has left in history. No one can read the confidential Government letters without perceiving what a great part he played in Irish parliamentary life, how much the Government dreaded his opposition, how anxious they were even at the time when they distrusted him the most to secure his support. Charlemont, who differed strongly from his policy in some periods of his career, never lost his respect and admiration for him, and in the Memoirs which he wrote, and which were not intended for publication, he pronounced Flood to be 'a man of consummate ability,' 'who for the fourteen first years of his parliamentary life had uniformly acted the most patriotic part, actively and incessantly exerting those wonderful talents with which he was endowed to the honour and benefit of his country.' Peter Burrowes, who was an excellent judge of eloquence, and who through his whole life was the warm friend and admirer of Grattan, nevertheless pronounced Flood to be 'perhaps the ablest man Ireland ever produced, indisputably the ablest man of his own times.' Langrishe, Curran, and Barrington formed a very similar estimate of his powers, and Sir Lawrence Parsons, who was himself one of the most sagacious members of the Irish Parliament, has written about him in still warmer terms. 'The

contemp  
compliments

impartial judgment of subsequent ages,' he wrote, 'will consider him as unrivalled in his own country; and had it been his fortune to have moved upon a theatre as capacious as his own mind, his celebrity would not have been exceeded by any man in any other.'

Posterity has not ratified this judgment, and there is something very melancholy in the life of Flood. From his earliest youth his ambition seems to have been to identify himself with the independence of the Irish Parliament. But though he attained a position which, before him, had been unknown in Ireland, though the unanimous verdict of his contemporaries pronounced him to be one of the greatest intellects that ever adorned the Irish Parliament, and though there is perhaps no act of his life which may not be at least plausibly defended, yet his career presents one long series of disappointments and reverses. At an age when most statesmen are in the zenith of their influence he sank into political impotence. The party he had formed discarded him as its leader. The reputation he so dearly prized was clouded and assailed; the principles he had sown germinated and fructified indeed, but others reaped their fruit, and he is now scarcely remembered except as the object of a powerful invective in Ireland, and as an example of a deplorable failure in England. A few pages of oratory, which probably at best only represent the substance of his speeches, a few youthful poems, a few laboured letters, and a biography so meagre and so unsatisfactory that it scarcely gives us any insight into his character, are all that remain of Henry Flood. The period in which he lived, a jealous, exacting, and uncertain temper, and two or three lamentable mistakes of judgment, were fatal to his reputation; and he laboured for a people who have usually been peculiarly indifferent to

the reputation of their great men. We may say of him as Grattan said of Kirwan: ‘The curse of Swift was upon him, to have been born an Irishman and a man of genius, and to have used his talents for his country’s good.’

## HENRY GRATTAN

A PAPER was found in Swift's desk after his death, containing a list of his friends, classified as grateful, ungrateful, and indifferent. In this list the name of Grattan occurs three times, and each time it is marked as grateful. The family was one of some weight in the country, and the father of the subject of the present sketch was Recorder and member for Dublin. As I have already had occasion to observe, Dr. Lucas was his colleague and his opponent, and a bitter animosity, both personal and political, subsisted between them. The Recorder seems to have been a man of violent and overbearing temper, firmly wedded to his own opinions, and exceedingly intolerant of contradiction. He was greatly exasperated with his son for adopting what would be now called Liberal politics, and he carried his resentment so far as to mark his displeasure in his will. Henry Grattan was born in the year 1746. From his earliest youth he manifested the activity of his intellect, and the force and energy of his character. Some foolish nursery tales having produced in his mind those superstitious fears that are so common among children, he determined when a mere boy to emancipate himself from their control, and was accustomed to go at midnight into a churchyard near his father's house, where he remained till every qualm of terror had subsided. He had a distinguished career at Dublin University, and acquired a passion for the classics, and especially for the great orators of antiquity, that never deserted

him through life. Long before he obtained a seat in Parliament he had begun to cultivate eloquence. His especial models were Bolingbroke and Junius, and his method was constant recitation. He learnt by heart certain passages of his speeches, and continually revolved them in his mind till he had eliminated all those almost imperceptible prolixities that exist in nearly every written composition. By this method he brought his sentences to a degree of nervousness and of condensation that is scarcely paralleled in oratory. Several anecdotes are told of the difficulties into which his passion for recitation brought him. On one occasion his landlady in England requested his friends to remove that mad young gentleman who was always talking to himself, or addressing an imaginary person called Mr. Speaker. On another, when apostrophising a gibbet in Windsor Forest, he was interrupted by a tap on the shoulder, and a curious inquiry as to how he had got down. His letters written at this time show that he was subject to violent fits of despondency, and they betray also a morbidness that is singularly unlike his character in after years.

Shortly after leaving the University he was called to the Bar, and resided for some time in the Temple, where he probably occupied himself much more in the study of oratory than of law. He had obtained access to the House of Lords, and had come completely under the spell of Lord Chatham's eloquence. He wrote an elaborate character of Chatham which was inserted in 'Baratariana'; and in a letter written some years later he gives a long and very minute description of his style of speaking. The following extract will be read with pleasure, as forming a vivid description of perhaps the greatest of British orators: 'He was very great, but very odd; he spoke in a style of conversation; not,

*eloquence*



however, what I expected. It was not a speech, for he never came with a prepared harangue. His style was not regular oratory, like Cicero or Demosthenes, but it was very fine and very elevated, and above the ordinary subjects of discourse. . . . Lord Mansfield, perhaps, would have argued the case better; Charles Townshend would have made a better speech; but there was in Lord Chatham a grandeur and a manner which neither had, and which was peculiar to him. What Cicero says in his "*Claris Oratoribus*" exactly applies: "*Formæ dignitas, corporis motus, plenus et artis et venustatis, vocis et suavitas et magnitudo.*" His gesture was always graceful. He was an incomparable actor; had it not been so he would have appeared ridiculous. His address to the tapestry and to Lord Effingham's memory required an incomparable actor, and he was that actor. His tones were remarkably pleasing. I recollect his pronouncing one word—*effete*—in soft, charming accent. His son could not have pronounced it better. He was often called to order. On one occasion he said, "I hope some dreadful calamity will befall the country that will open the eyes of the King;" and then he introduced the allusion to the figure drawing the curtains of Priam, and gave the quotation. He was called to order. He stopped and said, "What I have spoken I have spoken conditionally, but now I retract the condition. I speak absolutely, and I do hope that some signal calamity will befall the country;" and he repeated what he had said. He then fired and oratorised, and grew extremely eloquent. Ministers, seeing what a difficult character they had to deal with, thought it best to let him proceed. On one occasion, addressing Lord Mansfield, he said, "Who are the evil advisers of his Majesty? Is it you? is it you? is it you?" (pointing to the Ministers, until he came near Lord

Mansfield). There were several lords round him, and Lord Chatham said, "My lords, please to take your seats." When they had sat down, he pointed to Lord Mansfield and said, "Is it you? Methinks Felix trembles." It required a great actor to do this. Done by anyone else it would have been miserable. . . . When he came to the argumentative part of his speech, he lowered his tone so as to be scarcely audible; and he did not lay so much stress on those parts as on the great bursts of genius and the sublime passages. He had studied action, and his gesture was graceful, and had a most powerful effect. His speeches required good acting, and he gave it to them. Their impression was great. His manner was dramatic. In this it was said that he was too much of a mountebank, but, if so, it was a great mountebank. Perhaps he was not so good a debater as his son, but he was a much better orator, a better scholar, and a far greater mind. Great subjects, great empires, great characters, effulgent ideas, and classical illustrations formed the material of his speeches.'<sup>1</sup>

It is curious that Grattan, who was so sensible to the advantages of a graceful delivery in others, should have been always remarkable for the extreme singularity and awkwardness of his own. Byron, who otherwise admired his speaking exceedingly, called it a 'harlequin manner.'<sup>2</sup> O'Connell said that he nearly swept the ground with his gestures, and the motion of his arms has been compared to the rolling of a ship in

<sup>1</sup> *Grattan's Life*, by his son, i. 234-238.

<sup>2</sup> This was in prose. In his poetry he described Grattan as:

'With all that Demosthenes wanted endued,  
And his rival or victor in all he possessed.'

*The Irish Avatar.*

a heavy swell, and to the action of the mower as his scythe cuts through the long grass.

While the genius of Chatham had stimulated the ambition of Grattan to the highest degree, the friendship of Flood was directing his enthusiasm in the channel of Irish politics. These two men, afterwards such bitter rivals, were at first intimate friends; and the experience and the counsel of Flood had undoubtedly great influence in moulding the character of Grattan. They declaimed together, they acted together in private theatricals, they wrote together in 'Baratariana,' and they discussed together the prospects of their party.

In 1775 Lord Charlemont brought Grattan into Parliament. The circumstances were, in some respects, very favourable, for the patriotic party had lost its leader, and there was no one to assert its principles with effect. Grattan cannot with any justice be accused of having supplanted Flood. He simply occupied the position which was vacant, and which his extraordinary eloquence naturally gave him. Whatever opinion might be entertained among his hearers of the wisdom of his political views, or of his judgment, there could be no question that he was from the very commencement of his career by far the greatest orator of the day. When, therefore, the party found themselves deserted by their old leader, they naturally rallied round the one man who could supply his place.

The eloquence of Grattan, in his best days, was in some respects perhaps the finest that had been heard in either country since the time of Chatham. Considered simply as a debater, he was certainly inferior to both Fox and Pitt, and perhaps to Sheridan; but he combined two of the very highest qualities of a great orator to a degree that was almost unexampled. No British orator, except Chatham, had an equal power of firing

an educated audience with an intense enthusiasm, or of animating and inspiring a nation. No British orator except Burke had an equal power of sowing his speeches with profound aphorisms and associating transient questions with eternal truths. His thoughts naturally crystallised into epigrams; his arguments were condensed with such admirable force and clearness that they assumed almost the appearance of axioms; and they were often interspersed with sentences of concentrated poetic beauty, which flashed upon the audience with all the force of sudden inspiration, and which were long remembered and repeated. Some of his best speeches combined much of the value of philosophical dissertations with all the charm of the most brilliant declamation. I know, indeed, none in modern times, except those of Burke, from which the student of politics can derive so many maxims of political wisdom, and none which are more useful to those who seek to master that art of condensed energy of expression in which he almost equalled Tacitus. His eloquence had nothing of the harmonious and unembarrassed flow of Pitt or of Plunket; and he had no advantages of person and no grace and dignity of gesture; but his strange writhing contortions, and the great apparent effort he often displayed, added an effect of surprise to the sudden gleams of luminous argument, to the severe and concentrated declamation, to the terseness of statement and the exquisite felicities of expression with which he adorned every discussion. O'Connell, comparing him to Pitt, said that he wanted the sustained dignity of that speaker, but that Pitt's speeches were always speedily forgotten, while Grattan was constantly saying things that were remembered. His speeches show little wit and no great skill in the lighter forms of sarcasm; but he was almost unrivalled in delineations of char-

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acter, and in brief, keen arguments. In carrying on a train of sustained reasoning he was not so happy. Flood is said to have been his superior; and none of his speeches in this respect are comparable to that of Fox on the Westminster scrutiny.

The extraordinary excellence of his speaking consisted much more in its positive merits than in its purity or freedom from defects. There was no conscious affectation in his nature, but he had an intense mannerism, which appeared equally in his speaking and in his private life, in almost everything he said or wrote. He rarely said simple things in a simple way; and the quaint peculiarities of his diction were as conspicuous in his conversation and in his unstudied replies as in his elaborate orations. His compositions were almost always overloaded with epigram and antithesis, and his metaphors were often forced, sometimes confused and inaccurate, and occasionally even absurd. His invective, though very powerful, was sometimes grossly and extravagantly exaggerated. But few speakers of any age or country have equalled him in originality, in fire, and in persuasive force. In one respect he would probably have had even more influence in our day than in his own, for the reporter's pen would have concealed most of his defects and magnified most of his merits. The political orator now speaks less to those who are assembled within the walls of Parliament than to the public outside. The charm of manner, the music of the modulated tone, have lost much of their old supremacy, while the power of condensed and vivid expression has acquired an increased value. The speaker who can furnish the watchwords of party, the epigrams of debate, will now exercise the greatest and most abiding influence. A hundred pens will reproduce his words, and they will be repeated



when the most brilliant displays of diffusive rhetoric are forgotten.

Much of the great influence of the speaking of Grattan was due to moral causes. There was a transparent simplicity and rectitude of purpose, a manifest disinterestedness, a fervid enthusiasm of patriotism in his character, which added greatly to the effect of his eloquence, and gave him an ascendancy that was exercised by none of his contemporaries in Ireland. From the very beginning of his career his eloquence became the great vivifying energy in the patriotic party, and every question received a new impulse from his advocacy.

I have already enumerated the principal objects of the party with which Grattan was connected. He assisted Burgh and Flood in carrying the free-trade question to a triumphant issue. He endeavoured, though for a time unsuccessfully, to place the Irish army under the control of the Parliament; and, above all, he gave an unprecedented impulse to the great cause of parliamentary independence. In April 1780 he moved 'that no person on earth, save the King, Lords, and Commons of Ireland, has a right to make laws for Ireland.' This motion he introduced with a speech of splendid eloquence, and the effect produced by it was very great. Flood, however, perceived that it was premature and would have been defeated, and at his suggestion it was withdrawn, but the true sentiments of the Parliament are sufficiently shown in the letters of Lord Buckinghamshire, who was then Viceroy, to the Government in England. 'It is with the utmost concern,' he wrote, 'I must acquaint your lordship that, although so many gentlemen expressed their concern that the subject had been introduced, the sense of the House against the obligation of any statutes of

the Parliament of Great Britain within this kingdom is represented to me to have been almost unanimous.'

legislative  
independence  
1782

Shortly after this debate the Volunteer Convention assembled at Dungannon to throw their influence into the scale. Grattan, in co-operation with Flood and Charlemont, drew up a series of resolutions which were adopted unanimously, asserting the Irish independence; and Grattan, alone, drew up another resolution expressing the gratification with which the volunteers had witnessed the relaxation of the penal code. It is scarcely possible to exaggerate the importance of this last resolution. It marked the solemn union between the two great sections of Irishmen for the purpose of obtaining the recognition of their political claims. It showed that the old policy of governing Ireland by the division of her sects had failed; and that if the independence of Parliament were to be withheld, it must be withheld in opposition to a nation united and in arms.

The Government at length yielded. The Duke of Portland was sent over as Lord Lieutenant, with permission to concede the required boon. At the last moment an effort was made to procure a delay, but Grattan refused to grant it; and on the 16th of April, 1782, amid an outburst of almost unparalleled enthusiasm, the declaration of independence was brought forward. On that day a large body of the volunteers were drawn up in front of the Parliament House of Ireland, and it was through their parted ranks that Grattan passed to move the emancipation of his country. Never had a great orator a nobler or a more pleasing task. It was to proclaim that the strife of six centuries had terminated, and that a new era had dawned upon Ireland. In the eyes of the Irish patriot the promised land seemed reached. The dream of Swift and Molyneux was realised. The blessings of independence were rec-

onciled with the blessings of connection; and in an emancipated Parliament he saw the guarantee of the future prosperity of his country and the Shekinah of liberty in the land.

The colours have now faded from the picture, and after all the deceptions and changes of later Irish history it is difficult to conceive the hopes that at this time centred in Ireland on a Parliament which was purely Protestant and essentially aristocratic. It was impossible, indeed, not to perceive that there was still much to be done—disqualifications to be removed, anomalies to be rectified, corruption to be overcome; but Grattan, at least, firmly believed that Ireland possessed the vital force necessary for all this; that the progress of a healthy public opinion would regenerate and reform the Irish Parliament; and that every year the sense of independence would quicken the sympathy between the people and their representatives. It was, indeed, a noble triumph, and the orator was worthy of the cause. In a few glowing sentences he painted the dreary struggle that had passed, the magnitude of the victory that had been achieved, and the grandeur of the prospects that were unfolding. ‘I am now,’ he exclaimed, ‘to address a free people. Ages have passed away, and this is the first moment in which you could be distinguished by that appellation. I have spoken on the subject of your liberty so often that I have nothing to add, and have only to admire by what heaven-directed steps you have proceeded until the whole faculty of the nation is braced up to the act of her own deliverance. I found Ireland on her knees; I watched over her with a paternal solicitude; I have traced her progress from injuries to arms, and from arms to liberty. Spirit of Swift, spirit of Molyneux, your genius has prevailed! Ireland is now a nation. In that char-



acter I hail her, and, bowing in her august presence, I say *Esto perpetua!*'

Freedom  
(+ harmony)  
achieved  
c. 1782

The concession was made with an ungrudging hand, and in a few years most of the badges of subserviency which the Irish Protestants had worn were discarded. Between 1768 and 1782 the duration of Parliament was limited to eight years; the commercial restrictions which excluded Ireland from foreign and from colonial trade, and which crippled her most important manufactures, were almost all abolished; the judges were made immovable; the perpetual Mutiny Act was repealed, and the Irish army placed under the full control of the Irish Parliament; the appellate jurisdiction of the House of Lords, which had been destroyed in 1719, was restored; the Act asserting the right of the British Parliament to make laws for Ireland was repealed. The power of the two Privy Councils to suppress or alter Irish Bills was also given up, and the principle that the King, Lords and Commons of Ireland were alone competent to make laws for Ireland was fully recognised. Immediately after the concession of independence a day of thanksgiving was appointed to consecrate the triumph, and a vote for the support of twenty thousand sailors for the English navy was agreed upon. This last was almost the first measure of the emancipated Parliament. In this, as in every other period of his career, Grattan was anxious to show in the most unequivocal manner the sympathy of Ireland with England, and the compatibility of an ardent love of independence with a devoted attachment to the connection. He said himself, 'I am desirous above all things, next to the liberty of the country, not to accustom the Irish mind to an alien or suspicious habit with regard to Great Britain.' The House of Commons, in the address to the Throne, warmly ac-

knowledgeed the completeness of what had been done. 'We do assure his Majesty,' it said, 'that no constitutional question between the two nations will any longer exist which will interrupt this harmony, and that Great Britain, as she has approved of our firmness, so may she rely on our affection.' The address was carried with only two dissentient votes.

While the greatest Irishmen in Ireland were thus working out the freedom of their country, the greatest Irishman in England wrote to encourage them and to express his approval of the work. 'I am convinced,' wrote Burke to Lord Charlemont, 'that no reluctant tie can be a strong one, and that a natural, cheerful alliance will be a far more secure link of connection than any principle of subordination borne with grudging and discontent.' The Whig Party, who were for a brief period in power, appeared to have concurred in this view; and Fox, in one of his speeches in 1797, expressed it very unequivocally. 'I would have the Irish Government,' he said, 'regulated by Irish notions and Irish prejudices, and I am convinced that the more she is under Irish government the more she will be bound to English interests.'

The Parliament at that time determined to mark its recognition of the services of Grattan by a grant of 100,000*l*. Grattan, however, refused to receive so large a sum, and was with some difficulty induced to accept half. This grant enabled him to devote himself exclusively to the service of the country without practising at the Bar, to which he had been called.

I need not revert at length to the question of Simple Repeal, which I have already so fully considered. The arguments on each side of that controversy must be admitted to have been very nicely balanced, and the authorities were also very evenly divided. Grattan

reckoned among the supporters of his view Charlemont, Fox, the Irish chief justices and chief baron, and several other Irish legal authorities. He had, however, injured his cause greatly by bringing forward a resolution declaring that all who asserted that England had authority over Ireland were enemies to the country—a resolution which was wholly indefensible, which Flood triumphantly assailed, and which, after a short discussion, was withdrawn. A dangerous reaction of opinion had undoubtedly set in. Two or three unfortunate incidents in England strengthened the suspicion that the English Government did not mean to accept loyally the new Constitution of Ireland, and the attitude of Flood and of the Volunteer Convention excited just alarm. The British Government, however, dealt most wisely and most liberally with the question. Though maintaining with Grattan that the repeal of the Declaratory law had fully established the legislative independence of Ireland, they frankly consented to allay the doubts that had arisen by a Renunciation Act meeting fully the demands of Flood. It declared that the ‘right claimed by the people of Ireland to be bound only by laws enacted by his Majesty and the Parliament of that Kingdom in all cases whatever, and to have all actions and suits at law or in equity, which may be instituted in the Kingdom, decided by his Majesty’s Courts therein finally and without appeal from thence, shall be, and it is hereby declared to be established and ascertained for ever, and shall at no time hereafter be questioned or questionable.’ It would be impossible to make a fuller or more honourable disclaimer of power, and it was made not at a time of great national danger, but at the very period when the re-establishment of peace had restored the full power of England.

The British Government could not have met more fully the demands of Ireland, nor could the guarantees of the independence of the Irish Parliament appear on paper more complete. Yet on both sides of the Channel wise men perceived that the Constitution that was being established contained within it serious elements of danger or decay. A Parliament in which the overwhelming majority of the seats were nomination boroughs under the control of the Treasury or of a few private individuals was not really representative, and, although it had clearly shown that on certain questions it had a will of its own and could faithfully reflect the wishes of the nation, yet it was certain in normal times to relapse into a condition of systematic dependence. If a real reform of Parliament changed the system; especially if the great mass of the unrepresented Catholics were introduced into the Constitution, or if seditious or anti-English elements obtained predominant, or even considerable, influence in Parliament, the conditions of Irish parliamentary life would fundamentally change, and the difficulty of making the machine work in harmony with the British Government would be enormously increased.

But, apart from these considerations, the Constitution of 1782 was not likely to prove workable. One of the most important functions of a Parliament is to supervise and control the Executive. In England the Executive is virtually the child of Parliament, as the ministers can only be selected among the men who are pleasing to it, and who have become pleasing to it by a long career in English politics, and a vote of censure by the House of Commons can at any time displace them. But the Irish Executive was appointed by the English Government, and depended for its continuance on the votes of the English Parliament, and a govern-

ment which had the full confidence of the Irish House of Commons might at any time be overthrown by an English party vote on some purely English question. The Lord Lieutenant was appointed in England, and received his instructions from English ministers; his Chief Secretary was the leader of the Irish House of Commons, and both of them were usually perfect strangers to Ireland till they received their offices and were placed at the head of Irish affairs. The two countries were so closely connected that it was impossible for Ireland to escape English party tendencies, and some of the Irish borough-owners were English noblemen with English political influence. It was quite possible that opposite parties might at the same time predominate in the two countries, but it remained with the English ministers to appoint the men who administered affairs and distributed patronage in Ireland, and it was only by the extreme measure of refusing supplies that the Irish Parliament could in any degree control them. If the royal veto were exercised in Ireland it could only be on the advice of the British ministers, and while the Irish Parliament had obtained the most complete control over the resources of Ireland, the Irish Government depended on and fluctuated with English party changes.

In foreign policy the dangers were still greater. If the Sovereign made war, it must be on the advice of his British ministers, but Ireland was at once bound by the declaration, while in the long course of discussion and negotiation that preceded the declaration she had no part. These things were carried on by diplomatists appointed by a British Government, and by debates and votes in a British Parliament, and it was more than probable that the question at issue would be one in which Ireland had no interest. She had, however,

one power which would have great efficacy, but which would be of the greatest danger to the Empire. If she disapproved of a war or of an alliance she might refuse to vote supplies. She might withdraw her forces from the field, make a tacit arrangement of neutrality with the enemy, refuse to take any part in the prosecution of the war, or in the general defence of the Empire. It is true that this had never happened, that with a loyal Parliament it was not likely to happen, and that in every struggle in which England had been hitherto engaged the Irish Parliament supported her to the full extent of its power. But in the forecasts of the future this danger could not be omitted, and it might be brought about not merely by positive sedition in Ireland, but even by a strong party spirit running on questions of foreign policy in opposite directions in the two islands. The fifteen thousand men supported by the Irish Parliament formed a very admirable contribution on the part of Ireland to the defence of the Empire, but there was a party led by Flood, who maintained that a large military retrenchment was imperatively needed in order to bring the finances of the country into a proper condition.

The difficulties relating to commerce were also very serious. In the period of the servitude of the Irish Parliament England had exercised her power with the object of securing for herself an absolute monopoly in the chief branches of the manufactures and commerce, and Irish competition had been deliberately crushed. This system had now been given up. Trade with England could only be carried on with the concurrence of the British Parliament, but in her trade with foreign powers Ireland was absolutely free. She had been granted free trade with the English colonies of Africa and America on the sole condition of establishing the

same duties and regulations as those to which the English trade was subject, and she had full power of encouraging her own manufactures and commerce either by bounties or by protective laws. Under such circumstances it was quite possible that Irish commerce might come into direct collision with that of England; that Ireland might come into closer commercial relations with another power and might even learn to look upon England as her most formidable rival. As we have already seen, there was a party which contended that in the situation of Ireland strong protective legislation was a necessity if she was to maintain any manufacturing prosperity in face of the vast capital and the old establishments of England, and such a policy would inevitably lead to political estrangement.

On the other hand, Ireland had no power of protecting her own commerce. She had no diplomacy, and if there were negotiations to be carried on, or disputes to be settled with a foreign power, she could only act through British diplomats. She had no fleet to enforce her demands, nor did she make any regular contribution to the British navy which protected her commerce. Yelverton, it is true, had endeavoured to induce the Irish Parliament to establish a fleet of its own, but the measure was looked on with disfavour by the English ministers, who much preferred that it should on critical occasions make some grant to the British fleet. They would, indeed, gladly have seen the provision repealed which prevented 12,000 of the 15,000 soldiers raised in Ireland from being removed from the country without the consent of the Irish Parliament.

These considerations seem sufficient to show that without some supplementary legislation the Constitution of 1782 was not likely to prove permanent. The

difficulties were perhaps somewhat exaggerated by English statesmen, but they were certainly real, and they might easily become fatal if Irish national feelings were ever alienated from England. As long as the Irish Parliament consisted of men who were heartily loyal to the Empire, it was not likely that the connection would ever break down on mere questions of machinery. At the same time, the chief governors of Ireland at the period when the independence of the Irish Legislature was declared were exceedingly desponding. The Duke of Portland, who was Viceroy when the legislative independence of Ireland was declared, said in a confidential despatch that unless some closer tie of connection was established between the two countries than now existed, it was very doubtful whether it would not be good policy for England to abandon Ireland altogether. Temple, who succeeded Portland, predicted that the concession which had been made would sooner or later close for ever the accounts between the two kingdoms. Rutland, who succeeded Temple, foretold that without a legislative union Ireland would not remain twenty years connected with Great Britain.

In the opinion of English statesmen 'a superintending power and supremacy of Great Britain in all matters of State and general commerce' ought to be acknowledged, and Ireland ought to bind herself to pay a fixed proportion towards the expense of protecting and defending the Empire. Fox himself, while recognising the completeness and finality of the surrender of all British legislative and judicial supremacy over Ireland that had been made in 1782 and 1783, acknowledged that it was only with extreme reluctance and through irresistible necessity that he had consented to the surrender of the right of external and commercial legislation which left the Empire without one general



superintending authority to embrace and comprehend the whole system of its navigation. It was his hope, and it was the hope of other serious politicians, that, while the constitutional questions between the two countries were regarded as finally settled, a treaty might be made which would strengthen the bond of connection by assimilating and defining their commercial arrangements and adjusting other matters that might arise for their reciprocal advantage and their common defence.

In December 1783, Pitt's ministry began, and the state of Ireland was one of the first subjects to which his attention was directed. It was in some respects very critical. Two bad harvests and a period of severe commercial depression had caused great distress, with the natural accompaniment of considerable discontent. The Irish Parliament adopted the policy which it usually adopted in time of famine, of imposing an embargo on the export of corn, flour, and potatoes, and at the same time encouraging by a bounty the importation of foreign food. The finances of the country, though not very seriously affected, were by no means good, for the public charges now exceeded the revenue by about 150,000*l.* a year. The prices of the first necessities of life were unusually high, and in the commercial centres there was much distress. All this strengthened the force of the protectionist party, which was supported by Flood, and which insisted that Ireland could never resist the overwhelming competition of English manufactures unless her own manufactures obtained by protective duties a decided preference, at least in the home market. Trade outrages of a serious kind had become frequent in Dublin. A violent and seditious press had grown up, and an alarming change had taken place in the volunteer movement. The Vol-

unteer Convention, presided over by Charlemont in November 1783, had for a time seemed likely to become a kind of second Parliament; but it was at least a highly respectable body which was thoroughly loyal to the connection, and it probably represented more truly than the Parliament of College Green the sentiments of the Protestant gentry of Ireland. On its dissolution most of the better class of the volunteers retired into private life. The organisation, however, had not come to an end, and there were alarming signs in 1784 that dangerous demagogues or outlaws were availing themselves of the title of volunteers to obtain arms, and were drilling for their own purposes many of the lower class of the people who were chiefly Roman Catholics. Some political movement was mixing with this. The cry of Catholic franchise was again raised. Parliamentary reform of a democratic type was held up as an ideal to be obtained by the menace, if not by the exercise, of force, and it was believed that there were men who, under the pretext of parliamentary reform, were really aiming at the separation of the two countries.

Pitt was an earnest parliamentary reformer. He inherited from his father the belief that unless the British Parliament was fundamentally reformed British liberty could not long survive, and he could not fail to perceive that the Irish Parliament needed reform much more than the English one. Till the French Revolution, and its close connection with the doctrine of the natural right of every citizen to political power, threw him, like the majority of his fellow-countrymen, into opposition to all constitutional change, his sincerity, at least as an English parliamentary reformer, is beyond dispute; and those who read his confidential correspondence with the Irish Government in 1784 can as

little doubt his earnest desire to carry out some measure of parliamentary reform in Ireland. Though much more liberal towards Catholics than most of his contemporaries, he admitted that at this period it must be on a purely Protestant basis, and he was well aware of the special difficulties to be encountered in Ireland. The Irish Government was strongly opposed to it. Rutland, who was then Lord Lieutenant, wrote that it would be a measure 'of extreme danger,' though he frankly acknowledged that the existing system of government did not bear the smallest resemblance to representation.

If Pitt persisted in his desire to reform the Parliament, Rutland agreed with him that the least dangerous course would be an addition to the number of county members; but he declared himself unable to see how quiet and good government could exist in Ireland under a popular form of government, and he feared that any substantial change of parliamentary influence would seriously strengthen the dangerous elements in the nation—the Dissenters, who were deeply imbued with republican principles—the Catholics who might easily attain a predominance in a democratic Parliament. Orde, the Chief Secretary, held very similar views. He was persuaded that there was a party in Ireland who had 'a settled resolution to attempt a perfect separation between the two countries' and with whom parliamentary reform was merely a pretext, or a step towards attaining their object. Fitzgibbon had recently become Attorney-General, and his first principle of Irish Government was that the English Cabinet must by all means secure and maintain a complete command over the Irish Parliament.

Pitt, however, was not convinced by these representations. He was willing to adjourn the question of

reform till the commercial arrangements had been carried, but he was convinced that some reform must be carried in both countries; that if it were carried in England it would be impossible to resist it in Ireland; and that, as soon as a commercial treaty had taken away from Ireland all pretext for considering her interests as separate from those of England, a prudent and temperate reform in that country would strengthen both the connection and the Protestant interest. He naturally looked on the recent proceedings of the volunteers with great alarm. He said very reasonably that he did not in the least object to meetings outside Parliament for petitioning for parliamentary reform, or for communicating political sentiments or for organising lawful measures. But all this was wholly different from what had recently taken place in Ireland; and he fully agreed with Fox that the position the Volunteer Convention had assumed of an armed and rival Parliament was absolutely incompatible with parliamentary government, and that it was of the utmost importance that no concession should be made to it. From this point of view he naturally welcomed the division which had taken place on the subject of the Catholic claims. 'Too much pains,' he wrote, 'cannot be taken to encourage the salutary jealousy of the designs of the Catholics which begins to show itself. That capital line of division will rend asunder the whole fabric which has been rearing. Finally, too, in my opinion, the Protestant interest must be the bond of union between Ireland and this country.' His own conclusion was that parliamentary reform must be carried, and ought to be carried, in both countries, but the Cabinet determined to postpone an Irish Reform Bill till after commercial relations between the two countries had been established on a treaty basis, and if

possible till after a Reform Bill had been carried in England.

In by far the greater part of this policy Grattan was prepared to support him. At the time, it is true, of the declaration of Irish independence, he had refused to permit any delay for the purpose of entering into a negotiation about the exact limits of the Constitution and the commercial relations, declaring that the constitutional question of the independence of the Irish Parliament must be first and decisively settled; but when this was conceded he was willing and eager to enter into any negotiations that might tend to strengthen the bond between the two countries. In all his policy at this period he steadily acted on his avowed principle of discouraging everything that might tend to alienate Ireland from Great Britain. He moved the address, declaring that no further constitutional question existed to disturb the harmony of the two countries. He opposed not only the revival of the constitutional question by Flood, but also the continuation of the Volunteer Convention after the attainment of the independence of the Parliament had been acknowledged. Though an ardent parliamentary reformer, he refused to place the question in the forefront as long as it emanated from an armed body. After the Convention had dissolved itself, he opposed in the strongest terms the continuation of the volunteers, and especially the growing habit of enlisting men of the lowest orders, governed by irresponsible demagogues; and, as we have seen, he strenuously opposed the proposals of Flood for diminishing the Irish army. He was no less firm in opposing the policy of protective duties and non-importation agreements, maintaining that a war of tariffs between England and Ireland would provoke political dangers that would far outweigh any possible commercial ad-

vantages. The House of Commons by large majorities rejected the resolutions in favour of protective duties, but they were defended by powerful arguments and had much support in the country. Something, however, it was felt must be done, and the Irish House took the initiative in proposing it. An address to the King was voted in May 1784, in which, after warm protestations of loyalty and gratitude, the House expressed a hope that a well-digested plan for a liberal arrangement of commercial intercourse between Great Britain and Ireland might be brought forward as speedily as possible, and expressed their opinion that such a plan, formed upon the broad basis of reciprocal advantage, would greatly strengthen the union between the countries.

It was thus in full accordance with the Irish Parliament that Pitt resolved to introduce his commercial propositions. He acted with great deliberation, and after much confidential communication with the Irish Government. The difficulties to be met were of two kinds. As Pitt intended to open to Ireland the great benefit of the English market, and to secure Ireland for all future time from the restrictive trade laws which had been so injurious to her in the past, he justly urged that she might be reasonably expected to make 'some fixed mode of contribution, in proportion to her growing means, to the general expenses.' His object, he said, was to make 'England and Ireland one country in effect, though for local concerns under different legislatures, one in communication of advantages, and of course in the participation of burdens.' It is true that Ireland already supported an army of 15,000 men, 3,000 of whom were at the disposal of the British Executive, while the remainder could be moved from Ireland with the assent of the Irish Parliament;

but she contributed nothing to the navy which protected her shores and her commerce, and the Irish Parliament might at any time reduce its military establishment and alter its conditions. What was needed was that the contribution of Ireland should be placed beyond the fluctuations of Irish parties and politics; that it should be under the complete control of the Supreme Executive of the Empire, and that it should be framed in such a manner as to rise and fall in proportion to the increase or diminution of Irish wealth. Considering that a free trade with England would certainly add largely to the wealth of Ireland, such a demand seemed very reasonable, and it would incalculably strengthen and consolidate the Empire.

The Irish Government admitted this, but they urged that there were great difficulties to be apprehended. Beyond all things the Irish Parliament was sensitive to any encroachment on its independence, and if the contribution could be represented as a tribute paid by Ireland to England it would never pass. The war of the American revolution had specially turned on a question of this nature, and it had created a public opinion which looked with extreme jealousy on any contribution that did not depend on the legislation of the country that paid it. When Lord North had thrown open to Ireland the plantation trade, no such stipulations had been annexed to it, and the rejection of the Irish Reform Bill and the refusal of protective duties had made Irish opinion at this time peculiarly suspicious and irritable.

The other great difficulty to be encountered was the protectionist spirit. The necessity for laws protecting native industry against foreign competition had long been accepted almost as an axiom both in England and on the Continent, and it was under this system that

the great English industries had grown up. The new scheme would for ever prevent Ireland from protecting her nascent industries by such laws, and in the opinion of some important Irish economists would secure for ever the monopoly of English capitalists in her market. In England, however, the dread of free trade was still stronger. The broad current of economical opinion was in favour of monopolies, and Pitt and Adam Smith were on these questions far in advance of their time. English manufacturers greatly feared that Ireland might become a most formidable competitor in the English market. She was, it is true, far inferior in capital, in skill, and probably in industry, but she had the advantage of much cheaper labour, and her industry was burdened by much lower taxes.

Pitt very skilfully met the first difficulty by throwing the contribution of Ireland on the hereditary revenue, and by devoting it to the support of the navy. It had always been an Irish grievance that the hereditary revenue was not under the control of the Parliament, but entrusted to the general direction of the Crown. By providing that when it rose beyond a certain point the surplus should be always applied to the navy, the Irish Parliament would obtain an assurance that all future increase in this revenue would be applied to a purpose in which Ireland had a real and great interest, for the navy would always be necessary to protect her coast and commerce. The arrangement was also peculiarly just, as the hereditary revenue consisted mainly of customs and excise duties, which is not only a form of revenue that most accurately measures the wealth of the country, but is also that which would be most promptly and directly affected by extensions of trade. The precise line beyond which the hereditary revenue was to be allocated to the navy was



not at first determined, but it was ultimately settled at a sum slightly higher than what the hereditary revenue at present produced. The payment to the navy therefore depended upon the increase of that revenue. 'If Ireland does not grow richer and more populous,' Pitt wrote, 'she will by this scheme contribute nothing. If she does grow richer by the participation of our trade, surely she ought to contribute, and the measure of that contribution cannot with equal justice be fixed in any other proportion.' As the whole arrangement was only to take place with the assent of the Irish Parliament, it seemed difficult to raise any constitutional grievance out of it.

The commercial benefits were to be granted with a most liberal hand. Lord North had already given Ireland full rights of direct trade with the plantations, and Pitt proposed to extend this liberty of trading to foreign and colonial goods carried through England, and to establish complete reciprocity of trade between England and Ireland. All Irish goods might be imported into England and all English goods into Ireland either freely or on duties that were the same in either country. When the duties in the two countries were unequal they were to be equalised by reducing the higher duty to the level of the lower; except in a few specified cases there were to be no new duties on importations or bounties on exportations, and each country bound itself to give a preference in its markets to the goods of the other over the same goods exported from abroad.

This scheme was a large and enlightened plan for binding the interests of the two nations indissolubly together, and if it had been carried out there can be but little doubt that it would have added greatly to the prosperity of Ireland. When it was laid before

Grattan, he at first hesitated about the compulsory contribution, urging that if the prosperity of Ireland very largely increased, the surplus of hereditary revenue might rise to an inordinate sum, and that it would be better to leave the contribution of Ireland to the navy to the independent action of the Irish Parliament. This objection, however, he consented to waive, but he insisted on one modification which, after some discussion and with some reluctance, the Government consented to accept. It was that in time of peace the contribution of Ireland should only come into force when the expenditure of Ireland did not exceed its revenue. In this manner he provided the most efficient check to the growing extravagance which had lately been displayed, and to the too frequent loans that grew out of it. The Lord Lieutenant fully justified this modification, which appears to have been also supported by the principal men in the Irish Government. 'When the nation,' wrote Rutland, 'instead of applying the redundancy of its revenues to the discharge of its incumbrances, agrees to appropriate that redundancy to the general expenses of the Empire, it cannot be thought unjust that it should at the same time restrain the Government from running into debt.'

The scheme was carried, in the form of resolutions, through the Irish House with no difficulty and by overwhelming majorities. Flood, it is true, censured it both on the ground of the contribution and still more on the ground that it shut the door against a protectionist policy; and there were some petitions in that sense from the manufacturers, but on the whole the welcome accorded to Pitt's scheme in the Irish Commons was unmistakable. Grattan cordially supported it; and in order that the provision limiting the contribution of Ireland in time of peace to years when

there was a surplus in the Exchequer should not be regarded as an attempt to evade contribution, the House at once imposed additional taxation which was estimated to produce 140,000*l.* a year, and cut down some of the grants that had been made from the Exchequer.

Ireland had done her part, but when the propositions came before the British Parliament they were at once met by an outburst of commercial jealousy very similar to that which had defeated the commercial clauses of the Peace of Utrecht. It seems to have spread through almost the whole circle of English manufacturing opinion, and it was fanned to the utmost by the English Opposition in Parliament. Fox at the same time did his utmost to excite Irish jealousy by representing the contribution of Ireland to the navy as of the nature of a tribute. 'I will not barter English commerce for Irish slavery,' he said, in a sentence which was constantly repeated; 'that is not the price I would pay, nor is this the thing I would purchase.'

The battle was long and fierce. There is not, I believe, the smallest ground for the charge which Irish writers have brought against Pitt of having acted with treachery towards Ireland. He found the overwhelming force of English manufacturing opinion against his scheme, and although he at last succeeded by his large and disciplined majority in carrying it through the House of Commons, he only did so by making concessions which materially altered its character, and altered it in almost every instance to the disadvantage of Ireland. It is not necessary here to examine those alterations in detail. The most important were provisions compelling the Irish Parliament to enact without delay or modification all present or future British laws relating to navigation and to the trade with British or foreign colonies, and giving the British Parliament full

power of regulating the terms on which goods could be exported from Ireland to the British colonies of America and the West Indies, and even in part to the United States of America.

It was impossible to question that the amended resolutions proposed materially to abridge the legislative powers of the Irish Parliament; to place that Parliament in a large field of legislation in a subordinate position to that of Great Britain; and to restrict some of the trade rights which, under Lord North's legislation, Ireland had been already granted. It is certainly not surprising that they should have been received in Ireland with an irresistible outburst of disapprobation, though it is probable that even in the new form it would have been to her advantage to have accepted them. The scheme opened the English market, and gave additional security to the Irish colonial market which might at present be at any time withdrawn by England. Foster and Pitt maintained that it was a mere treaty arrangement between two independent countries, and that Ireland, if she thought fit to relinquish the benefits, might at any time abolish the restrictions. The Chief Secretary himself, however, saw at once that in the amended form the measure could not be carried, and Grattan was now as strenuously opposed to it as Flood. After long and very brilliant debates, leave to bring in the Bill was only granted by 127 to 108. So small a majority in the first stage, and, in a House in which Treasury influence was so great, was plainly a defeat. The Government at once abandoned the Bill.

Considering the position of Grattan as the author of the independence of the Irish Parliament, and considering the manifest state of public opinion in Ireland, he is hardly, I think, to be blamed for the part which

he took, though the failure of the policy of Pitt is certainly to be regretted. It must, however, be remarked that none of the divergences on commercial questions which the English ministers feared ever took place. In the commercial treaty with France in 1786 some of the same questions revived, but Ireland cordially supported the policy of Pitt. Whatever other complaint may be brought against Grattan's Parliament, it cannot be accused of having in the smallest degree interfered with the commercial interests of England, and by several isolated measures it did much to achieve in detail the commercial union which was the desire of Pitt. The language of Lord Westmorland, who was Lord Lieutenant in 1790, in a private despatch to his Government, is on this matter decisive. 'Since the failure of the propositions for a commercial intercourse between Great Britain and Ireland no restraint or duty has been laid upon British produce or manufacture to prejudice the sale in this country, or to grasp at any advantage to articles of Irish manufacture; nor has any incumbrance by duty or otherwise been laid on materials of manufacture in the raw or middle states upon their exportation to Great Britain. At the same time, in everything wherein this country could concur in strengthening and securing the navigation and commerce of the Empire, the Government has found the greatest readiness and facility. The utmost harmony subsists in the commerce of the two kingdoms, and nothing has arisen to disturb it or give occasion for discontent.' More than once, indeed, the Irish Government expressed the willingness of the Irish Parliament to renew negotiations for a general commercial treaty with Great Britain, but they met with no encouragement.

From this time, however, Pitt seems to have ac-

quiesced in the views of the Irish Government that the Executive must maintain a complete ascendancy over the Irish Parliament, and that all serious parliamentary reform must be resisted. There can, I think, be little doubt that the prospect of a legislative union was already in his mind, as it was certainly in the minds of some other English statesmen, and it was probably the real key to much of his subsequent policy. A measure which was in itself so unpopular in Ireland could only be carried if the Government possessed an overwhelming influence over the Irish Parliament; it could only be made in some degree palatable to the Irish people if a great object of popular desire was withheld until it was accomplished, and conceded as its result.

Several years of great prosperity followed the struggle of 1784. The revenue rose rapidly. The credit of the nation greatly improved, and there were all the signs of a growing and steady advance. Whiteboy disturbances and combinations against tithes frequently took place, but they were usually very local, and on the whole the best authorities pronounced Ireland to be both more tranquil and more prosperous than they had ever known it. Several measures of considerable utility were carried at this time, and perhaps not the least valuable were the severe and drastic police measures for the suppression of disorder. A scheme of national education, which might have proved of vast advantage to the country, was proposed by the Chief Secretary Orde.<sup>1</sup> It was to a large extent a revival of the system which had been established by Henry VIII. and Elizabeth, and which had been suffered to fall into shameful neglect. He proposed new taxation for the

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<sup>1</sup> See Mant's *Hist. of the Church of Ireland*, ii. 702. *Grattan's Life*, iii. 295-296. *Irish Parliamentary Debates*, 1787.

establishment of a school in every parish, and also the establishment of four great schools, one in each province, diocesan schools, two great academies in the metropolis, and finally another university. The education was to be equally imparted to all, though those scholars only who were of the Established religion were to be maintained at the public expense. Resolutions founded on this plan passed the House of Commons, but on the death of Rutland and the change of government in Ireland it was unfortunately abandoned. But during these tranquil years nothing was done to correct the glaring abuses of the Irish Parliament, and on the contrary places and pensions were steadily multiplied.

The disposition of Grattan had generally been to support the Government in order that by doing so he might draw the two countries more and more together; but, as the influence of the Attorney-General Fitzgibbon in the Irish Government became supreme, as it became evident that the Government were determined to resist the most necessary and most moderate parliamentary reform, he gradually gravitated to opposition, and endeavoured to form a party which could exercise some pressure in the direction of reform. Personal friendship and political sympathy drew him closer to the Whig Opposition in England, and he began to feel that a change of ministry in England was the best if not the only chance of obtaining reform in Ireland. At the same time he was very far from being an indiscriminate opponent. His strong sense of the necessity at all hazards of repressing the organised disorder which was the special vice of Irish life never left him, and the stringent coercive measures, which were at this time carried by the Irish Parliament, found in him a warm general supporter, though on a few points he endeavoured to mitigate their severity or to limit their

duration; and he procured the withdrawal of one clause in Fitzgibbon's Whiteboy Act which would certainly have had the most mischievous effects. It provided that every Catholic chapel in which or adjoining which an illegal oath had been tendered should be razed to the ground and its materials sold, and that for three years no new Catholic chapel should be erected in the same parish.

He at the same time urged that coercive measures were useless if they were not accompanied or followed by an attempt to deal with the great abuses from which most Irish crime came, and in the very first place with the existing tithe system. It had indeed every fault that such a system could have. The tithes were paid to an alien Church. They were paid in kind; they were paid specially by the poorest Catholic cottiers, as the rich graziers had been exempted from the burden; they were paid with such an extreme inequality that different scales and systems of payment existed in different parts of Ireland, and their collection was so intricate, burdensome, and dangerous, that the clergymen were almost forced to farm them out to agents, who were more hated than any other class of men in Ireland. Grattan stated that the tithe-farmer seldom got less than one-quarter of the money collected, and sometimes one-third, that his agency fees were not only oppressive but often illegal, and that he reduced the poor to a condition of virtual slavery. Pitt, with the eye of a true statesman, had recommended as early as 1786 that tithes should be commuted into a money rate and levied on an uniform and simple system, but he did nothing to induce his Irish Government to carry out this view, and when Grattan proposed very similar plans that Government resisted and defeated them.

Grattan's plans were as far as possible from being



revolutionary. All he asked for was a commutation and a rearrangement of tithes; a general modus calculated on the average of several years, paid directly to the clergy, and raised like other county charges. He did not propose to touch the exemption of graziers, but he desired that the potato plot of the cottier should be always exempted, as it already was in the greater part of Ireland. He brought in slightly varying schemes to deal with the question in 1787, 1788, and 1789, and defended them in speeches not only of admirable eloquence but also of admirable knowledge, and he wished to accompany them by a much-needed tax on the non-resident clergy. But in the face of the opposition of the Government nothing, or almost nothing, was done, and the gross abuses of the Irish tithe system remained to furnish the United Irishmen with one of their chief means of fanning rebellion both among the Catholics and the Dissenters, and to become for more than one-third of the nineteenth century one of the chief sources of Irish crime.

One question, however, arose during this period of tranquillity which for a few weeks convulsed politics both in England and Ireland, and threw the usually subservient Parliament of Ireland into opposition to the English Government and to the majority of the British Parliament. This was the question of the Regency while George III. was incapacitated by insanity. It was acknowledged by both of the great parties in England that his eldest son being of full age was the person who should fill the position of Regent, and that it was for the Houses of Parliament to take the first action in placing him in that position; but Fox maintained that, according to the principles of hereditary monarchy, he had a right, as heir to the throne, to assume the full royal power during his father's in-

Regency

capacity, and that Parliament had only to attest this incapacity and to call upon the Prince by an address to assume the Government; while Pitt maintained that the Prince could only be made Regent by Act of Parliament, and that Parliament had the right of determining and of limiting his powers. I have elsewhere examined in much detail the arguments of this controversy, to which an importance which seems to me exceedingly exaggerated has been given. The true clue to the vehemence with which it was debated is to be found in the fact that the Prince of Wales was hostile to Pitt and in close relations with Fox. The Irish House of Commons, largely under the guidance of Grattan, adopted the Whig view, and the great borough interests which had hitherto attached themselves to the Government speedily broke away from their moorings when it appeared probable that the centre of patronage would permanently change. Grattan was no doubt largely influenced by his sympathy with the Whig party, but he also argued with much force that the limitations so much insisted on in England were confessedly unnecessary in Ireland, and that an address from the Irish Parliament calling on the Prince of Wales to assume the Regency in Ireland was the course which was most consistent with a Constitution which made the Irish Parliament wholly independent of the Parliament of Great Britain. The recovery of the King put an end to the question, but the attitude of the Irish Parliament greatly strengthened Pitt's antipathy to that body, and greatly increased the influence of Fitzgibbon, who had proved in this crisis his ablest and most prominent supporter. Fitzgibbon soon after received his reward and became Lord Chancellor.

Looking back on this period of Irish history it appears evident that it was one of those in which a mod-

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erate reform of Parliament could have been most easily effected, and would have been most beneficial to Ireland. The abuses of the Irish parliamentary system were enormous, scandalous, and unquestioned. The money spent in pensions in Ireland was not merely relatively but absolutely greater than in England; the Pension List trebled in the first thirty years of George III., and in 1793 it amounted to no less than 124,000*l*. After the struggle on the Regency question an additional 13,000*l*. a year was added, and a number of new sinecures or useless places were created with the sole object of strengthening parliamentary influence. In less than twelve months fourteen new parliamentary places and eight or nine parliamentary pensions were created. In 1790 it was stated that in the preceding twenty years the number of new or revived places and salaries created, and held by members of Parliament, was not less than forty, and in a House of Commons of three hundred members one hundred and eight were either placemen or pensioners. It was stated by Ponsonby that one-eighth of the revenue of Ireland was divided between members of Parliament. Peerages were lavishly distributed among all who commanded political power, and there is good reason to believe that some were directly sold for money. In the single year of the Regency struggle sixteen peers were either created or promoted. Not more than eighty-two members of the House of Commons were returned for counties and towns of any magnitude. The rest represented pocket boroughs, most of them under the control of single individuals, and large groups of these were in the hands of a few prominent members of the House of Lords. In the words of Grattan in 1790, 'above two-thirds of the returns to this House are private property; of those returns many at this moment ac-

tually sold to the Minister; the number of placemen and pensioners sitting in this House equals near one half of the whole efficient body, the increase of that number within the last twenty years is greater than all the counties of Ireland.'

Grattan and a small group of independent members were indefatigable in their efforts to reform these abuses, but the reforms they proposed were very far from being of a revolutionary or democratic character. They considered that an active political life and a strong national feeling were the only means of drawing together the two nations that inhabited Ireland, and that by gradually and carefully broadening the basis, and at the same time purifying the organs, of political life this great work might be successfully accomplished. They brought forward resolutions condemning the increase of pensions and the multiplication of places; place bills and pension bills, copied from English legislation limiting the number of placemen and pensioners who might sit in Parliament, and a 'Responsibility Bill' giving additional guarantees for the proper expenditure of different branches of the revenue. They also attempted, though without success, to introduce into Ireland the English measure disqualifying revenue officers from voting, but any change in the suffrage that would seriously shake the authority of the upper classes or weaken property in the Irish Parliament was wholly alien from their views.

Flood had more of the temperament of a demagogue than Grattan, but the first principle of his Irish policy was that all political power must be left in the hands of the ascendent creed, and even within that limit he was far from desiring unrestricted democracy. His Reform Bill, which was introduced at the behest of the Volunteer Convention, clearly shows this. I have

already mentioned its provisions which would have profoundly changed the parliamentary system in Ireland. It limited the duration of the House of Commons to three years, excluded from it all persons holding pensions for less than twenty-one years, obliged pensioners who were capable of sitting, as well as those who accepted places under the Crown, to be re-elected, swept away the pocket boroughs by enlarging the limits of the constituencies, placed more stringent conditions on the residence of electors, and imposed on all members an oath against bribery; but it only extended the suffrage to a large number of Protestant leaseholders in the towns; and it was estimated that it could not have added much more than four hundred to the total number of voters in Ireland.<sup>1</sup>

The Reform Bill, introduced by William Ponsonby and Grattan in 1794, was even less democratic. It left the duration of Parliament untouched, and merely proposed to infuse a new independent element into the House of Commons by giving an additional member to each county and to the cities of Dublin and Cork, and to make the small boroughs really representative constituencies by throwing into them considerable sections of the surrounding country. On the whole, the reform party in the Irish Parliament would have been abundantly content if they could materially diminish the corrupt influence of the Crown and make the Irish Parliament a genuine representation of the freeholders and considerable leaseholders. Grattan invariably maintained that in a country situated like Ireland it was of the utmost importance that the legislation should not pass out of the full guidance and control of the property of the country.

<sup>1</sup> *Grattan's Life*, iii. p. 124-125, 143-146.

A House of Commons, consisting of the independent landed gentry, the leading lawyers, and most considerable merchants of both religions, resting mainly on an electorate of freeholders, was the ideal to which he aspired. He had, through the whole of his life, a strong conviction that while Ireland could be best governed by Irish hands, democracy in Ireland would inevitably turn to plunder and anarchy. We have seen how vehemently he had blamed the later volunteers for 'drilling the lowest classes of the populace.' 'The old, the original volunteers had become respectable because they represented the property of the nation, but attempts had been made to arm the poverty of the kingdom. They had originally been the armed property of Ireland; were they to become the armed beggary?' In his denunciation of the scandalous manner in which peerages were bestowed, his favourite argument is that such a degradation of the peerage would inevitably weaken and discredit a moral influence with which Ireland could not safely dispense, and might possibly lead men to desire the overthrow of an Upper Chamber, without which 'no country was ever temperately or securely conducted.'

Burke himself was hardly a more strenuous opponent of the democratic theories of French origin which, in the last days of the century, began to prevail. Bad as was the existing system, he declared that he would prefer it to a system of representation which would destroy the influence of the proprietors of the soil. 'The best method,' he said, 'of securing the parliamentary constitution, is to embody in its support the mass of property, which will be generally found to include the mass of talent.' 'The plan of personal representation from a revolution of power would speedily lead to a revolution of property, and become a plan of

plunder as well as a scene of confusion; for if you transfer the power of the State to those who have nothing in the country, they will afterwards transfer the property. . . . Of such a representation the first ordinance would be robbery, accompanied with the circumstance incidental to robbery—murder.’ He always maintained that no greater calamity could befall Ireland than to set population adrift from the influence of property; to ‘detach and divide the landed interest’ from the body of the people; ‘to destroy the influence of landed property,’ and thus give up ‘the vital and fundamental article of the British Constitution.’ In every period of his life he strenuously maintained that a nation with social and religious divisions, and antecedents of property such as exist in Ireland, was totally unfit for democracy. He discouraged all attempts to set up rival centres of political power outside Parliament, and the habit of appealing lightly to ‘the latent and summary powers of the people,’ and he drew a broad distinction between the people and the populace.

A reformer of such a stamp was assuredly no danger to the State, but he was opposed by a Government of overwhelming power who refused to yield anything, and the Irish Parliament and government remained with all their flagrant abuses when the French Revolution burst on the world. Beginning with a complete abolition of tithes, and proclaiming as a fundamental doctrine that all men were equal and had equal and inalienable right to political power, the principles of this Revolution swept like a new religion over Europe, and soon fastened on the morbid and corrupt elements in every State. It is not surprising that its influence should have been powerfully and speedily felt in Ireland. A school rapidly arose which was completely alienated from the Irish Parliament; which taught that

the Constitution of 1782, instead of being a thing to admire, to cherish, and to improve, was a pure imposture, and which sought to reconstruct the whole government of Ireland on the most approved democratic principles of Rousseau. The Reform Bill of the United Irishmen proposed that Ireland should be divided into three hundred equal electoral districts, each returning one member; that every full-grown male who had resided for six months in the constituency should have a vote; that the representatives should be paid; that no property qualification should be required from them, and that the House of Commons should be annually elected.

It was chiefly among the Dissenters of the north that these views at first found acceptance, and the main weapon by which they hoped to secure their triumph was an alliance with the Catholics. For some time the Catholic question had in a great degree slumbered. Connivance and indifference had suffered large portions of the penal code to become obsolete long before they were repealed, and the Relief Bills of 1774, 1778, and 1782, though they left the Catholics absolutely deprived of every vestige of political power, had removed most of the grievances which were acutely felt. By taking the oath of allegiance, and subscribing a declaration of loyalty, they could now obtain an assured legal position. Their religion could be freely practised. The restrictions and prohibitions that had prevented them from educating their children at home were for the most part repealed. All the more serious restrictions relating to property were removed. They could not, it is true, acquire by purchase absolute ownership of land, but they might take leases for 999 years. With this exception their rights of purchasing, bequeathing, hiring, farming, and inheriting property



were almost the same as those of Protestants, and a number of insulting, and for the most part obsolete, provisions—such as those imposing on them under certain circumstances special taxation, enabling Protestants to seize their horses, and forbidding them to live in particular towns—were swept away. But they were still excluded by law from the whole legal profession, from the electorate, from Parliament, from the juries, from everything that gave any share of political or municipal power or dignity. And this exclusion existed when Ireland possessed a considerable and wealthy commercial Catholic class, and when the doctrine of the inalienable right of all men to political power was rapidly extending.

Public opinion had begun to show itself in their favour.<sup>1</sup> As I have already noticed, the volunteers, who were at first exclusively Protestants, and who were recruited chiefly in the north, soon admitted Catholics

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<sup>1</sup> An acute observer, writing in 1770, thus described the religious state of Ireland: 'The rigour of Popish bigotry is softening very fast, the Protestants are losing all bitter remembrance of those evils which their ancestors suffered, and the two sects are insensibly gliding into the same common interests. The Protestants, through apprehensions from the superior numbers of the Catholics, were eager to secure themselves in the powerful protection of an English Minister, and to gain this were ready to comply with his most exorbitant demands. The Catholics were alike willing to embarrass the Protestants as their

natural foes; but awakening from this delusion, they begin to condemn their past follies, reflect with shame on having so long played the game of an artful enemy, and are convinced that without unanimity they never can obtain such consideration as may entitle them to demand, with any prospect of success, the just and common rights of mankind. Religious bigotry is losing its force everywhere. Commercial and not religious interests are the objects of almost every nation in Europe.' Preface to the edition of Molyneux's 'Case of Ireland,' which appeared in 1770.

into their ranks, and would probably have gone further but for the influence of Charlemont and Flood. Burke espoused their cause warmly, wrote a petition for them, exerted all his eloquence in their behalf, and sent over his son to assist them. But the man to whom they owed the most was undoubtedly Henry Grattan. He was almost the only Irishman of note in Ireland who at that time ceaselessly advocated their unqualified emancipation. Flood, Charlemont, and Lucas had a different theory. They foresaw that the admission of the Roman Catholics to political equality would sooner or later prove incompatible with the establishment of the Church of the minority and probably of much besides; they were not prepared to surrender that establishment, and they therefore maintained that, while the Roman Catholics should be admitted to perfect toleration, they should not be admitted to political power. This distinction Grattan refused to recognise. He argued that to exclude the great bulk of the people from Parliament on account of their religion was to inflict upon them a positive injury, and to deprive them of all security for their toleration. 'Civil and religious liberty,' he said in one of his speeches, 'depends on political power; the community that has no share directly or indirectly in political power has no security for its political liberty.' He believed also, like most eminent men of his generation, that the difference between the two religions was much exaggerated; that it was continually lessening, and that the process of assimilation would be greatly accelerated by the removal of the religious disabilities. His speeches are full of intimations of this opinion. 'Bigotry may survive persecution, but it can never survive toleration.' 'What Luther did for us, philosophy has done in some degree for the Roman Catholics, and their religion has undergone a

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silent reformation; and both divisions of Christianity, unless they have lost their understanding, must have lost their animosity, though they have retained their distinctions.' 'It is the error of sects to value themselves more upon their differences than upon their religion.'

Among the Roman Catholics themselves, for a considerable time, scarcely any political life had existed. About the middle of the century, it is true, three Catholic writers, named O'Connor, Wyse, and Curry, made laudable efforts to arouse them; and a Catholic Association was founded in 1759, but their spirits were completely cowed by long oppression, and the restrictions on education had prevented the development of their intellect. At last, however, Father O'Leary, a really remarkable writer, rose among them. His principal works are a series of masterly letters to Wesley, who had written against the removal of the penal laws; an address to the Roman Catholics, inculcating loyalty during the Rebellion of 1745; and a short treatise on the Socinian controversy. In England he is chiefly remembered by his happy retort to a Protestant bishop, to whose picture of the horrors of purgatory he replied, 'Your lordship might go farther and fare worse;' but his name is still popular in Ireland, and his writings are well worthy of perusal, if it were only for the great beauty of their style. He was a man of much wit and social charm, and became a member of a convivial society called the 'Monks of the Screw,' which was presided over by Curran and which included most of the first men in the country. It is a slight but a significant fact, that when on one occasion he went to the Volunteer Convention, the volunteer guard turned out and presented arms to this Catholic priest. He attained a position in Ireland which no member of his

order had held for more than a century; his writings were widely read, and Grattan panegyricised him in Parliament. The concluding sentence of that panegyric is curiously characteristic of the speaker, of his subject, and of the theological temperature of their time. 'If I did not know him,' he said, 'to be a Christian clergyman, I should suppose him by his writings to be a philosopher of the Augustan age. O'Leary appears to have been a thoroughly loyal man and to have rendered some considerable services to the Government, and he received from it a small secret pension.

With this exception, the Catholics seem for many years to have made scarcely any decided effort to improve their condition, though a Catholic Committee existed for the purpose of watching over their interests. It was chiefly under the direction of Lord Kenmare and a few other leading Catholic country gentry.

Grattan conducted their cause with great tact. He refused to make it a party question, and by this refusal obtained the assistance of Sir Hercules Langrishe, who was one of the ablest of his political opponents, and left it always open to the ministers to adopt his views.

It was the opinion of the leading Catholics that the initiative in abolishing the penal laws should be left with the Government. Grattan for a long time shared it, and he was very conscious that his own party was divided on the subject, and that it would be extremely unfortunate if the Catholic question became a party question. The Irish Government, however, at this period was in the hands of men who were completely opposed to concession. The Catholic question, in their eyes, was not so much a religious question or a question of toleration as a question of the displacement of political power; an effort to break down the Treasury monopoly in Parliament; a new and dangerous form of that

innovating spirit which they considered it their main task to oppose. The influence of the Dissenters of the north was soon felt in the Catholic Committee. In 1791 a formidable schism broke out in it. Lord Kenmare and more than sixty of the leading Catholic gentry seceded from it, and it began to fall wholly into democratic hands. A Dublin tradesman, named John Keogh, who long played a considerable part in Irish politics, became its guiding influence, and in numerous counties and large towns Catholic meetings were held, and resolutions carried supporting Keogh and censuring the seceders. Yet in the face of this new and growing movement the Government was absolutely hostile. In 1790 a loyal Catholic address, intended to be presented to the Lord Lieutenant, Lord Westmorland, on his visit to Cork, had been returned because it contained a hope that their loyalty would lead to a further relaxation of the penal code; and in the beginning of the following year a Catholic deputation to the Castle, asking for the repeal or modification of many of these laws, was dismissed without even the courtesy of an answer.

In October 1791 the Catholic Committee issued a declaration, demanding in peremptory terms a complete abolition of the penal code, and in the beginning of 1792 they sent a deputation to England to lay their case before the King.

A grave division of opinion now broke out between the Government of England and the Irish Government. It was the decided opinion of Pitt, Dundas, and Lord Grenville that the time had come when considerable concessions should be made to the Irish Catholics. They were all of them men without the smallest tinge of religious bigotry, and they were at the same time fully sensible of the new dangers that were arising from

the French Revolution, and from the democratic propagandism and fanaticism which accompanied it. In their eyes the overtures the northern Dissenters were making to the Irish Catholics were full of danger, and it was of the utmost importance that the Catholics should look to Government and not elsewhere for support. In the great struggle that had broken out Catholicism appeared to them the most powerful moral influence opposed to the Revolution. All over Europe it was now the rallying point of Conservatism, and its overthrow was one of the first objects of the revolutionists. Burke, who had just seceded from the Whig party through his hostility to the Revolution, and who had lately published his 'Reflections' on that Revolution, the most profound and eloquent of all defences of the Conservative view of the Constitution, was the steady friend of the Catholics; and at a time when he was preaching with unrivalled power the danger of tampering with the framework of the existing British Constitution, he urged that the Constitution of Ireland could not be better strengthened than by introducing gradually and carefully a Catholic element of property and education into political life. The existing monopoly of political power in Ireland, he contended, could not continue, and to grant—though possibly under a somewhat higher qualification—votes to Catholic freeholders, and to give the Catholic gentry some share of political power, would be the best means of preserving the Irish Parliament from democratic and revolutionary change. He suffered his son to become the agent of the Catholics, and he advocated their cause steadily both in public and in private. A measure had recently been carried ameliorating the position of the English Catholics which, though it did not give them political power, made their position in some respects better than

that of the Catholics in Ireland, and this formed another argument in favour of some concessions.

Under such circumstances, Dundas at the end of 1791 wrote to Lord Westmorland that, in the opinion of the English Government, the Catholic question should be seriously taken in hand. They were of opinion that all laws which obstructed Catholics in the exercise of any profession, trade, or manufacture; which restricted their intermarriage with Protestants; which interfered with the unlimited power of the Catholic father over the mode and place of the education of his children; which made a distinction between Protestant and Papist in the use of arms, and which prevented Papists from serving on grand or petty juries, should be absolutely repealed; and they at the same time submitted to the Irish Government the strong expediency of granting them a certain measure of voting power for county though not for borough elections.

These proposals were received by the Irish Government with absolute consternation. In letter after letter Lord Westmorland assured the ministers in England that any attempt to give the Irish Catholics a share in political power must lead to anarchy, and would probably end in separation; that it was of the utmost importance that the fact that the English ministers had ever entertained such a design should be concealed; that if they wished to carry it into effect they would be unable to do so, for the whole Protestant and borough interest would resist it to the last. The chief members of the Irish Government seem to have been substantially united on this question, but the dominating influence was probably the Chancellor Fitzgibbon, and the great parliamentary interests of the Beresfords and Elys supported him. Some wished at all hazards to oppose every concession. Others reluctantly consented to de-

fer to the wishes of the English ministers on minor points, provided all share of political power was refused. They urged also—and on this point I believe they were fully justified—that the proposal of giving arms to the Catholics was extremely dangerous. Catholics of position and respectability had not the smallest difficulty in obtaining licenses for carrying them, and the Catholic gentry were as sensible as the Protestants of the utility of a law which kept arms out of the hands of the poorest, the most ignorant, the most lawless and riotous portion of the population.

Dundas appears to have been for a time anxious to insist upon the liberal policy of the English Government, but Pitt determined not to act in opposition to the wishes so strongly expressed by his representatives in Ireland, and the controversy ended in a feeble compromise. The English ministers at first desired that a law in favour of the Catholics should be announced as a Government measure in the speech from the Throne; but at the request of Lord Westmorland this was not done. There was no mention of the Catholics in the Lord Lieutenant's speech. A Relief Bill was introduced, but it was moved by a private member on the Government side, though it was seconded by the Chief Secretary. The proposals to give Catholics a share in the parliamentary suffrage, to admit them to the grand and petty juries, and to extend their right of carrying arms were dropped. The new measure, however, opened to them the lower branches of the legal profession, though they could not be King's counsel or judges; it repealed the laws restricting the number of their apprentices; it abolished various laws about their intermarriage with Protestants, as well as the perfectly obsolete laws prohibiting them from educating their children abroad and making the permission of a

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Protestant bishop necessary for the establishment of a Catholic school. On one point Pitt peremptorily insisted in defiance of the expressed desire of the Lord Lieutenant; the Irish Government must use no language closing the door against further concessions.

Grattan always maintained that the representations made by the Irish authorities of the hostility of the Protestants to Catholic concessions were unfounded, or at least enormously exaggerated, and that the resistance was in reality that of a corrupt Government and borough monopoly. In the opinion of Richard Burke, the violent party in the House of Commons consisted of not more than a hundred members—most of them being in office. Grattan, like Burke, strongly urged that the time had come when it was vitally necessary to the security of the Irish Constitution that its basis should be broadened, and that the Catholic gentry should be given a share in the government of their country, and in consequence an increased power of guiding their co-religionists. It soon became known that the English Government was more favourable to them than the Irish one, and on both sides the agitation was rapidly spreading. Among the many remarkable documents of the time was a petition to the Irish Parliament from the Protestants of Belfast begging that every portion of the penal laws should be repealed. The Catholic Committee issued a no less remarkable declaration in February 1792, in which they declared that they only asked admission to the profession and practice of the law; capacity to serve as county magistrates, and on grand and petty juries; and a right to vote for Protestant members of Parliament, but only in the counties and in such a manner that a Roman Catholic freeholder should not vote unless he rented and cultivated a farm of 20*l.* a year in addition to his

forty-shilling freehold, or possessed a freehold of 20*l.* a year. In another declaration they solemnly protested their loyalty, and disclaimed all intention of disturbing or weakening the establishment of the Protestant religion or Protestant Government in Ireland. On the other hand, several grand juries passed resolutions condemning all projects of extending political power to Catholics. It was said that this was done at the direct instigation of the Irish Government, and it is certain that many of the great borough-owners had a dominating influence over the grand juries of their counties, and that leading men closely connected with the Government were indefatigable in their efforts to kindle a strong spirit of Protestant ascendancy in the country.

This spirit was intensified by a bold measure of the Catholics, who issued a circular inviting the Catholics in every parish in Ireland to choose delegates to the Catholic Committee in Dublin in order to assist in procuring 'the elective franchise and an equal participation in the benefit of trial by jury.' Men were not unnaturally alarmed at the prospect of another representative body, modelled after the Volunteer Convention, but consisting wholly of Catholics. Grattan, however, declared in Parliament that it was the ministers who 'took the lead in fomenting a religious war. They began it; they acted in the mongrel capacity of country gentlemen and ministers. . . . They had, I understand, informed the British ministry that the influence of the Crown could not induce a majority to vote against [*sic*] the Catholic pretensions, and then they themselves took a leading part to make the difficulty in the country which they complained of in their despatches.'

Neither the tone of the debates in Parliament, nor the attitude of the Protestants towards the Catholic

questions in the years that preceded or in the year that followed 1792, support the statements of Lord Westmorland about the violent, general, and inflexible Protestant opposition to further concession. If Pitt had insisted on it there is little doubt that it would have been carried. In the country the Presbyterians generally favoured it as the united Irish movement grew among them, and as it was inseparably connected in their minds with Parliamentary reform. At the same time, the events of the Revolution had infused a new passion and violence into Irish politics. The feeling that the Catholic question had become a struggle for power had increased. The demands of the Catholics and the republican feeling in the north were both rising, and in some counties in the north violent outbreaks of disorder, largely tinged by agrarian motives, were taking place between the Defenders and the Peep-of-Day Boys, the first being exclusively Catholic and the second exclusively Protestant.

In Ulster, at least, the signs of the growth of French principles were very evident. Flags bearing the harp without the crown; rejoicings at the capture of the Bastille and at the victories of France; pamphlets and addresses demanding democratic reform, and treating with utter scorn the existing Parliament and constituencies; above all, much indiscriminate arming under the name of volunteering, showed the dangerous spirit that was abroad. The Corporation of Dublin vehemently protested against the abandonment of any part of that Protestant ascendancy which their forefathers had won by their swords—‘A Protestant King of Ireland; a Protestant Parliament; a Protestant hierarchy; Protestant electors and Government; the benches of justice, the army and the revenue, through all their branches and details Protestant; and this system supported by

a connection with the Protestant realm of England.’<sup>1</sup> Grattan’s answer to one of their addresses was very characteristic. ‘I love the Roman Catholic; I am a friend to his liberty, but it is only inasmuch as his liberty is entirely consistent with your ascendancy, and an addition to the strength and freedom of the Protestant community.’<sup>2</sup>

Those who would fully study this most critical period of Irish history will find their best materials in the confidential correspondence of the Irish Government with the English ministers. In a sketch like the present such a study is impossible, but I have already indicated the leading principles that animated the chief persons in the administration of Ireland. They desired to resist persistently all steps towards parliamentary reform and Catholic emancipation. They maintained that the existing system gave the Executive a complete and absolute control over the Parliament, and that this control should never be weakened or abandoned, and the idea was clearly present to the minds of some of them that the one possible alternative was a legislative union, and that the dissension between Protestant and Catholic, the fears of the Protestants and the hopes or the despair of the Catholics might help to make it feasible. At the end of 1792 they tried to persuade the English ministers that the Catholic question had been settled for a long period. Nothing, they urged, but a bold attitude on the part of the English ministers was needed to allay the agitation. The belief that the English Government favoured Catholic concession had alone made the demand for it formidable, and the great danger of the present moment lay in the belief that the

<sup>1</sup> MacNevin’s *Pieces of Irish History*, p. 29.

<sup>2</sup> *Miscellaneous Works*, p. 289. This letter was written June 1, 1792.

English Government might renew this policy. It was with extreme reluctance that the Irish ministers acquiesced in the injunction of Pitt that they were to use no language shutting the door to future concessions. Beyond all other things it was now necessary that England should declare unequivocally her determination to support the Protestant Constitution of Ireland; that she should utter a decisive word barring the way to new concessions.

The decisive word was indeed uttered, but it was not that which the Irish Government desired. Pitt and Dundas had long thought that the time had come when some real power must be granted to the Irish Catholics, and they had warned the Irish Government that if a civil war broke out merely on the question of Protestant monopoly, England would not support them. The strenuous opposition of their representatives on the spot had naturally perplexed and alarmed them, and they for a time yielded to the judgment of those who might be supposed to have better means of judging than themselves. But they were now clearly convinced that their original policy was a wise one. The great French war was on the eve of breaking out, and with all the signs of revolution multiplying in Ulster they believed that further delay would be folly. Nor was the small concession proposed in 1792 likely to be sufficient. A power of voting on a higher qualification for the sixty-four county members in the Irish Parliament, leaving all other seats under purely Protestant control, was not likely to allay the agitation. A large and liberal measure must be granted, and granted speedily. By their express direction a paragraph announcing a new Relief Bill was inserted in the speech from the Throne, and the promise was fulfilled by a Bill which a few months before would have seemed im-

possible. It gave the elective franchise to the Catholics both in the counties and in the boroughs, and on the same terms as to Protestants. It freely admitted them to the grand juries and the petty juries. They were to be allowed to endow colleges, universities and schools, and to receive degrees in Dublin University. They were enabled to become magistrates, and to vote for magistrates in corporations, to hold commissions in the army and navy. With some specified exceptions, all civil offices were to be thrown open, and any remaining provisions which imposed disabilities upon them respecting personal property were to be abolished. The right to carry arms also was to be no longer dependent on creed. It was granted to all creeds alike, but subject to a property qualification.

This measure was by far the largest and most liberal concession ever made to the Irish Catholics, and, measured by the real transfer of power it involved, it was incomparably more important than the later measure of Catholic Emancipation. If the Irish Protestant Parliament deserves some credit for accepting it, the whole credit of the initiative, at least, belongs to the English ministers, who imposed their policy on their most unwilling representatives in Ireland. It is unnecessary here to follow the course of the debates. It is sufficient to say that the measure in all its leading provisions was carried by the Irish Parliament, and carried with no serious difficulty. The momentous clause, transferring to the Irish Catholics a vast numerical preponderance of county votes, passed by 144 votes to 72. It was hoped that by so great a concession the Catholics would be effectually detached from the republicans of the north, and that a reform of Parliament would be averted.

Looking back, however, on this page of history in

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the light of the event, it is impossible not to be sensible of how unfortunately, and in some respects how unskilfully, this great question was managed. It would have been far better if a measure of enfranchisement—even if it had been much less comprehensive—had been carried in the previous year, before the French war had broken out, and the republican spirit in Ulster had reached its present height; and it was nothing short of a calamity that the task of carrying it should have been entrusted to the administration of Lord Westmorland. The very ministers who only a few months before had been openly declaring that the smallest concession of political power to the Catholics would be ruinous, who had induced the House of Commons to take the extreme step of refusing even to receive a petition for the removal of Catholic disabilities, who had raised the banner of Protestant ascendancy in the country, and led or instigated a fierce agitation in favour of uncompromising resistance, these very ministers had now to introduce and carry a measure of almost unlimited concession. Fitzgibbon at least openly avowed in Parliament his scorn for the policy he supported. Is it surprising that a measure carried by such men, and in such a manner, failed to strengthen the Government or to bring with it moral weight?

*a bad measure*

Nor was the measure in its most essential parts a wise one. It gave at once too much and too little. It placed votes in the hands of almost the whole pauper tenantry of Ireland. The forty-shilling freeholders comprised the vast bulk of the most ignorant, the most turbulent, the most impoverished Catholic farmers. Not through their own fault—they were wholly uneducated, absolutely indifferent to politics, abjectly superstitious, and abjectly poor, and in many great districts not even capable of speaking or under-

standing the English tongue. It would be impossible to conceive a class less fitted for the independent and intelligent exercise of political power. The Catholic leaders themselves in 1792 had only asked for the suffrage on a higher plane, and although a distinction between Protestant and Catholic electors might not have been permanent, a 20% franchise at the end of the eighteenth century would have comprised all that was really intelligent and weighty in the Catholic population. Putting aside a few great towns, the representation of the counties was the one sound portion of the Irish House of Commons. In a Parliament of rotten nomination boroughs it on the whole represented faithfully and honestly the opinions of the Protestants of Ireland. Could the county constituencies be expected to retain their character when the overwhelming majority of the voters were such men as I have described? Nor was this all. The more temperate advocates of a reform of the Irish Parliament always looked forward to two measures as likely to correct its abuses. One of these was the remedy that Chatham had proposed in England—to strengthen the sound element in the Parliament by increasing the county representation. The other was to transform the small and nomination boroughs by including in their electorate portions of the surrounding country. In three provinces of Ireland the first effect of both of these measures would now be to increase the ascendancy of the forty-shilling freeholder.

It was no sufficient answer to say that the Protestants already possessed this franchise and that it seemed to work well. In a Constitution as oligarchical as that of Ireland it was very desirable that there should be some infusion of a pure democracy; and the Protestant forty-shilling freeholders of Ireland were in this



respect something like the scot and lot voters under the unreformed Parliament of Great Britain. They were, also, a class widely different from the new Catholic voters. They had not suffered under the depressing influences and the educational disabilities of the penal code. An ascendent caste has many temptations and is likely to have grave faults, but want of energy, independence, and intelligence are not among them. Probably a majority also of the Protestant forty-shilling freeholders were hand-loom weavers in Ulster, who usually had small farms in addition to their manufacturing industry. They were to a large extent Presbyterians, a shrewd, educated, prosperous and independent class, who were perfectly fitted to exercise political power.

The justification of the forty-shilling freehold franchise in the eyes of most of those who carried it was to be found in the habitual subserviency of the tenants to their landlords. In England, as well as in Ireland, it was then the universally accepted notion that tenants at elections should vote with their landlords, and that an increase in the number of agricultural voters merely meant an increase in the political power of their landlords.

Hitherto this had always been the case in Ireland. In that country, as Fitzgibbon once said, 'A landlord of straw could grind to powder a tenant of steel,'<sup>1</sup> and Burke, in a remarkable passage,<sup>2</sup> declared his belief that in the actual state of Ireland an extension of the suffrage to the Catholic forty-shilling freeholders 'would not make a sensible alteration in almost any one election in the kingdom.' But was this likely to

<sup>1</sup> See evidence of O'Connell before the Devon Commission, *Digest*, p. 835.

<sup>2</sup> Letter to Sir H. Langrishe.

continue? In one of the most impressive speeches ever made before the Irish Parliament, Sir Lawrence Parsons reminded the House that the difference of creed drew in Ireland an ineffaceable line of cleavage between the landlord and the tenant; that it was not from the hall but from the chapel that the poor Catholics derived the ideas that really governed them, and that the time might, and probably would, come when the centre of political influence would be changed, when the power of religion would be opposed to territorial interest, and when the small farmers would become a weapon of overwhelming power in the hands of their priests. Already something of the kind was shown in the election of delegates for the Catholic Convention.

That this prediction was fully verified is well known. For about a generation, however, the control of the landlords over their Catholic tenants was unbroken, and it had an economical effect of the worst kind. It is an exaggeration to attribute wholly, or even mainly, to this measure the extreme subdivision of farms which became one of the master evils of Irish life, and which rendered the great famine of 1846 so terrible. Powerful economical causes were tending in this direction, but there is no doubt that the Relief Act of 1793 seriously aggravated the evil. In all political contests the power and consequence of a landlord depended chiefly on the number of the votes he could command; and he had therefore a strong motive to encourage, or at least to acquiesce in, the constant subdivision of farms.

And while the Act gave equality of privilege to the most ignorant and incapable Catholics, it withheld equality from the most intelligent, the most loyal, the most important. The Catholic peasant could vote like his Protestant neighbours, but the Catholic gentleman

was still marked out from the Protestants of his own class by a degrading disability. He could, it is true, now become a Grand Juror and a magistrate, but he could not sit in either House of Parliament. No class of men had shown themselves in the past more indisputably loyal than the Catholic gentry, and an educated class naturally feels political disqualifications and inequalities far more keenly than an ignorant peasantry. By maintaining an irritating disability the Catholic question was left manifestly unsettled, and after all that had been given, it was quite certain that the exclusion could not permanently be maintained. Looking at the immediate future, if the object of statesmen was to meet a serious crisis by settling a great question and allaying a most dangerous agitation, it would be difficult to conceive a graver want of statesmanship than not to have at this time completed the settlement. Looking at the distant future, the case became, if possible, even stronger. One of the worst effects of the penal laws had been that it reduced to a very small proportion the Catholic landlords of Ireland, thus making the division of property coincident with the division of creed; a landlord class, mainly Protestant, ruling over a tenantry who in three provinces were nearly wholly Catholic. But if Catholic voters were now to be introduced in overwhelming numbers into the electorate, it was of the utmost importance that the small class of landlords of their own creed should retain all their power of guiding and influencing them, and of saving them from falling into unscrupulous hands. No class of men were likely in this respect to be so useful, and as Burke truly said, ‘to raise an aristocratic interest—that is, an interest of property and education—among them, and to strengthen by every prudent means the authority and influence of men of that description’

was a matter of the highest policy. The exclusion of the Catholic gentry from their natural share in political power had a directly opposite effect. No measure could be more clearly injurious to their political influence over their co-religionists. Grattan solemnly and truly warned the Government that its tendency was 'to detach and divide the landed interest of the Catholics from the body at large,' and in this way 'to destroy the subordination of the common people and to set population adrift from the influence of property.'

All this was clearly seen in the Irish Parliament, and the alarmed letters of the Government show that the feeling in favour both of complete Catholic Emancipation and of a reasonable reform was much stronger than they had expected. Ponsonby, who in 1792 had declared that the Catholics were not yet ripe for political power, now declared that, as the suffrage was conceded to them on the widest terms, it was pure folly to maintain the disabilities of the Catholic gentry. The Duke of Leinster, Lord Abercorn, and Mr. Conolly supported him, and Grattan threw all his powers on the same side. There is no reason to doubt that if the Government had wished at this time to complete the measure they could have done so. But the Irish Government would willingly have withheld everything, and Pitt had no wish to enter into a new controversy with them. The future Duke of Wellington was put up as the representative of the Government, and, viewed in the light of the future, his speech is very characteristic. 'He had no objection to giving Roman Catholics the benefits of the Constitution, and in his opinion the Bill conferred them in an ample degree. . . . With the Bill as it stands the Protestants are satisfied and the Roman Catholics contented. Why then agitate a question which may disturb both?'

In other respects the Act no doubt did much, and it was received with real satisfaction and gratitude by the Catholic leaders. The provision opening to them the degrees, though not the dignities and emoluments, of Dublin University proved especially acceptable. Catholics had for some time been admitted to its classes, and by connivance some of them appear even to have held scholarships without being obliged to conform to the Established faith.<sup>1</sup> The measure of 1793 opening its degrees carried out the policy which had been strongly advocated by its Provost Hely Hutchinson, and it was warmly supported by the heads of the University. For some seventy years of the nineteenth century the Catholic laity freely availed themselves of it, and with the exception of O'Connell it would be difficult to name any of distinction springing from their gentry or middle classes who had not been educated in its walls. Moore, Sheil, and nearly all the Catholic judges of that period were educated there. Hutchinson desired that a Roman Catholic Divinity school should be established in the University, and that the priesthood should not be educated wholly apart from their Protestant fellow-countrymen, and Grattan shared his view; but it was not acceptable to the Catholic episcopacy. It is, however, a curious fact that one graduate of Dublin University—Michael Slattery—became President of Maynooth, and afterwards Roman Catholic Archbishop of Cashel. No serious opposition to the education of Catholic laymen in the University was raised by their Church till the latter half of the nineteenth century, when the growth of Ultramontanism, and the immense increase of sacerdotal power in Ireland, which was the consequence of English demo-

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<sup>1</sup> Stubbs's *History of the University of Dublin*, pp. 238, 244.

cratic legislation, made it one of the great objects of the priesthood to obtain the same complete control over the higher as they already possessed over the primary education of their co-religionists.

Grattan and Ponsonby always maintained that if the Constitution of Ireland was to be made really representative, and the dangers of revolution averted, it was necessary to carry a reform of Parliament on the lines I have already indicated, abolishing the system under which more than two-thirds of the House of Commons consisted of men who were practically nominated. Sir Lawrence Parsons, in the speech to which I have referred, maintained that the Catholic question and the reform question should be indissolubly connected, and that the concession of political power to the Catholics ought to be made a part of a Reform Bill. He desired that they should be fully admitted to Parliament, but that they should be only admitted to the electorate on a twenty-pound franchise. A measure of this kind would have given the Irish Constitution an immense accession of real strength, though Burke reminded the House that if the growing agitation was to be effectually met they must also deal speedily with the tithe system, which was the chief practical grievance of the poor. But neither the Irish Government nor the English Government had any wish to carry a Reform Bill. They did not desire that the Irish Parliament should be a really independent body; they probably did not desire that it should be a permanent one, and under the existing Constitution they possessed a power which could not easily be broken.

The United Irishmen, whose influence was growing in the country, already included some men who hated England and her Government; but the object of the majority was simply parliamentary reform, and they

cared for the Catholic question chiefly as a means of obtaining that reform or as being a necessary part of it. The Catholic Relief Act of 1793 was therefore quite incapable of conciliating them. The process by which the more moderate members of the society were turned into rebels is well shown in the clear and evidently truthful memoir on the rise and aims of the United Irishmen, which was drawn up by their three leaders, O'Connor, Emmet, and Macnevin, when State prisoners.<sup>1</sup> The society, they tell us, was at first simply and frankly loyal, aiming solely at parliamentary reform and Catholic Emancipation, and valuing the latter chiefly as a condition or an element of the former. But, even in 1791, 'it was clearly perceived that the chief support of the borough influence in Ireland was the weight of English influence.' About 1795 the persistent and successful opposition of the Government to reform made the United Irishmen for the first time disloyal. 'They began to be convinced that it would be as easy to obtain a revolution as a reform, so obstinately was the latter resisted ; and, as this conviction impressed itself on their minds, they were inclined not to give up the struggle, but to extend their views. . . . Still,' they add, 'the whole body, we are convinced, would have rejoiced to stop short at reform.' They tried to avail themselves of French assistance because 'they perceived that their strength was not, and was not likely to become, equal to wresting from the English and the borough interests in Ireland even a reform.' They decided ultimately upon making separation rather than reform their ideal, because 'foreign assistance could only be hoped for in proportion as the object to which it would be applied was important to

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<sup>1</sup> *Castlereagh Correspondence*, i. 353-372.

the party giving it. A reform in the Irish Parliament was no object to the French ; a separation of Ireland from England was a mighty one indeed.'

Several secondary measures were, however, carried in this session, which fulfilled the wishes of the Whig Club and in some degree ameliorated the state of the Irish Parliament, though it left the ascendancy of the nomination boroughs untouched. The Pension List was reduced to 80,000*l.* a year. Placemen and pensioners were in future obliged to vacate their seats and to be re-elected to Parliament, and some considerable classes of them were made ineligible. The King gave up his hereditary revenue for a fixed civil list. A measure which Grattan had long advocated for encouraging the cultivation of barren lands by exempting them for seven years from tithes was accepted. The Irish libel law was assimilated to that of Great Britain. Some slight relaxation was given in the East Indian trade from which Ireland had been largely excluded by the monopoly of the East India Company, and, what was perhaps more important than any of these measures, the hearth tax, which was the one tax that weighed heavily on the poor, was materially lightened by a complete exemption of cottages with only one hearth.

The military and police measures required by the war were voted, as was always the case under the Irish Parliament, with great unanimity and liberality. A militia force of 16,000 men, raised by conscription for four years, did much to supersede the volunteer movement, and a Convention Act was carried which made illegal those representative bodies elected like a Parliament by different denominations of Irishmen, which had recently become so popular. An intended convention of the United Irishmen at Athlone appears to have been the immediate cause. The Bill was a declaratory



one, and therefore involved a retrospective condemnation of the Volunteer Convention at Dungannon and of other conventions which had been considered perfectly legal. On this ground it was opposed by Grattan, but to the great indignation of the United Irishmen he declared that bodies of this kind outside Parliament had become a grave danger to the State, and that the Government was fully justified in taking measures to repress them. Grattan also entirely dissented from the policy of Fox who, with the English Whig party, opposed the war. On the whole, this long and memorable session of 1793 ended with a great approach to unanimity in Parliament, and the Irish Government for a time, at least, believed that the disaffection in the country had seriously abated. Ten new promotions in the peerage were made, and it was a significant fact that among the promoted peers was Fitzgibbon, who now became a viscount.

The part which Grattan had taken in supporting all the military measures of the Government; his emphatic repudiation of that sympathy with the French Revolution which was so common among the English Whigs, and his denunciation of the scheme of democratic reform which had become popular in Ulster, severed him from a large proportion of the reform party which had once looked on him as their leader. His position was a very independent but also a very difficult one. He hated the Revolution and its principles almost as much as Burke, but unlike Burke, and unlike most English opponents of the Revolution, he continued to be an earnest though a temperate reformer. Although he had lost touch with the democracy of the north, he was still a great parliamentary power, and he carried with him the confidence of a large portion of the more moderate gentry throughout the country.

all  
aristocratic  
attitude

In a very confidential letter from Cooke, which was written during the session of 1794, there are some remarkable sentences, showing the part which Grattan had been playing and the effect it had upon at least one important member of the Government. 'You are doubtless extremely pleased,' he said, 'in England with the conduct of the Irish Parliament. . . . What would have been the effect of a strong parliamentary Opposition which could add the discontent of the moderate to the plots of the factious is easy to be conjectured. But now the support of the moderate conjoined to the force of Government is able to extinguish sedition. . . . Much credit is due to Mr. Grattan. He told Sir J. Parnell last year privately that if the concessions in agitation were granted he would no longer give any vexatious opposition. He has more than made good his word, for he has given decided support. . . . My best opinion is that Grattan is the most important character in Ireland, and that attaching him to Mr. Pitt's Government would be essential. This is difficult. He is very high-minded, and resentful, and suspicious. He is, however, very steady and honourable, and will act up to his professions. He has great sway over the public mind, and he must play such a part as not to lose his authority. He wants not, perhaps would not take, situation ; he would stipulate for measures. If any compliment were shown him, he would like it immediately from Mr. Pitt. In the uncertainty of events his conduct here might be decisive, and therefore he should be early thought of. Government is strong in numbers. They want not aristocratical addition. They want the chief of the people.'

Ponsonby's Reform Bill was brought forward again, though without success, in 1794, and Grattan took the occasion to give a distinct outline of his policy. He

desired 'that Ireland should improve her Constitution, correct its abuses, and assimilate it as much as possible to that of Great Britain; that whenever administrations should attempt to act unconstitutionally, but, above all, whenever they should tamper with the independence of Parliament, they should be checked by all means that the Constitution justifies; but that these measures and this general plan should be pursued by Ireland with a fixed, steady, and unalterable resolution to stand or fall with Great Britain. Whenever Great Britain, therefore, should be clearly involved in war, Ireland should grant her a decided and unequivocal support, except that war should be carried on against her own liberty.'

In addition to reform and Catholic Emancipation, Grattan made a new effort to obtain a vote in favour of a definite and final commercial treaty with England on the basis of complete reciprocity, the manufactures of each country being received on the same terms in the ports of both. It was the policy which Pitt had endeavoured to carry out in 1785, and the absence of such an arrangement was afterwards made one of the arguments for the Union and the concession of such an arrangement one of the great boons it offered. The Government received the scheme with much praise, but urged that the time was not fitting for raising the question, and at their urgent request the motion was withdrawn.

At last, however, it seemed as if the policy of Grattan were about to triumph. In July 1794 a powerful section of the Whig party, seceding on the ground of the policy of Fox upon the French war, joined the Government of Pitt, and a rearrangement of places took place. It was carried out with great difficulty and amid many misunderstandings, and there was an ex-

Grattan's  
Principles  
"enlightened"  
"liberalism"?

The Pitt  
Fox coalition  
Pitt withdrew  
Pitt  
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treme and evident jealousy between the two sections of the new coalition. It was ultimately determined after long negotiations that Ireland was to be placed in the department of the Duke of Portland, who had been Lord Lieutenant when the independence of 1782 was conceded, and who was now made Secretary of State for the Home Department; that Lord Westmorland was to be recalled from the viceroyalty as soon as a considerable place could be found for him; that one of the great Whig peers should fill his place, and Lord Fitzwilliam was designated for it. It appears from a letter of the Duke of Chandos to Flood in 1783 that he had in that year been offered and had refused the post;<sup>1</sup> and the Whigs had intended to send him to Ireland as Lord Lieutenant when the dispute on the Regency had made a change of government appear probable. He was a great Irish landlord, connected by marriage with the Ponsonbys, and well known to share Grattan's views on the Catholic question. He at first refused the post, and ultimately only accepted it with much reluctance, and on the understanding, which he shared with Portland, that the new ministers had been given a general management and superintendence of Ireland, and had full powers to reform the abuses which they believed to exist in the Irish Government.

The significance of all this was very manifest. Both in home and foreign politics, the Whig leaders who had now joined Pitt were substantially in agreement with Ponsonby and Grattan, and Portland was known to have shared the belief of Fitzwilliam that a completion of Catholic Emancipation was a measure which could not long be safely delayed. Fitzwilliam afterwards declared that on the day when Portland kissed hands,

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<sup>1</sup> Warden Flood's *Life of Flood*, p. 179.

which was before Fitzwilliam had accepted the vice-royalty, it was determined in Ireland to bring forward the Catholic question. Portland and Fitzwilliam had their own political friends in Ireland, and it was naturally assumed that these friends and their policy would now predominate in Irish affairs. This was the belief of the Whig leaders in England. It was also the belief in Ireland, whence letter after letter was sent to members of the English Government, declaring that the old supporters of Pitt were threatened with political extinction ; that the Ponsonbys were about to be the arbiters of Irish affairs ; that the old system under which the Irish Parliament had been so easily managed was about to be ruined.

All this occurred while Lord Westmorland was still Lord Lieutenant. Fitzwilliam made no secret of the fact that he had been designated for that office, and he began at once to lay the foundation of his future administration. This was done without the smallest concealment. His first offer was that of the Chief Secretaryship to Thomas Grenville, the brother of Pitt's most intimate colleague, Lord Grenville, and it was accepted, though at a later period Grenville reconsidered his intention. Fitzwilliam also put himself in immediate connection with Grattan and the two Ponsonby brothers. In August he wrote to Grattan, stating that, though not yet appointed, there was great probability that he would soon be in office, and added : ' Upon entering upon the administration of the affairs in Ireland, I shall look to the system of the Duke of Portland as the model by which I shall regulate the general line of my conduct. The chief object of my attempts will be to purify, as far as circumstances and prudence will permit, the principles of government, in the hopes of thereby restoring it that tone and spirit which so hap-

pily prevailed formerly. . . . It is, sir, to you and to your friends the Ponsonbys that I look for assistance. . . . Without the hope, which I am vain enough to entertain, of that assistance I should decline engaging in so hopeless a task as the government of Ireland;’ and he proceeded to express his hope that Grattan would accept a direct and avowed connection with the Castle.

Grattan, however, had resolved not to take office, though he was prepared to support cordially a government on the lines of the policy of Lord Fitzwilliam. At the express desire of the Duke of Portland, George Ponsonby came over from Ireland to consult upon the arrangements for the new administration, and Grattan either accompanied or immediately followed him. Grattan, the Ponsonbys, and Lord Fitzwilliam shortly after dined with Pitt and the Grenvilles at the house of the Duke of Portland, in order to exchange views on the subject, and at Pitt’s invitation Grattan alone visited Pitt, in order ‘to have an opportunity of conversing with him confidentially on the subject of an arrangement in Ireland.’<sup>1</sup> He brought back from this interview a clear conviction that the Catholic question would certainly be carried in the coming administration, though not on the initiative of the ministers. As his son reports, he said that Pitt’s very words in describing his intentions on this question were ‘not to bring it forward as a Government measure, but if Government were pressed to yield to it.’<sup>2</sup>

Grattan does not appear to have contemplated any complete change of men in Ireland, and he strongly urged, apparently in opposition to Ponsonby, that the present Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir John Parnell,

<sup>1</sup> *Grattan's Life*, iv. 175.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 177.

should be continued in office ; but some changes, he clearly saw, were necessary, the principal one being that Fitzgibbon should cease to be Chancellor. Nothing could be more hopeless or more humiliating than the position of a Lord Lieutenant, surrounded by men in office who were violently opposed to his policy, and at the same time deprived of the power of removing them. As Burke wrote : 'It is not to know Ireland to say that what is called Opposition is what will give trouble to a real Viceroy. His embarrassments are upon the part of those who ought to be the supports of English Government, but who have formed themselves into a cabal to destroy the King's authority.' It was already evident from the correspondence from Ireland that the members of Lord Westmorland's Government looked on the advent of Lord Fitzwilliam with extreme alarm and with bitter hostility, and it was quite certain that Fitzgibbon would be an implacable opponent of any Reform Bill on the lines of that with which Ponsoby had specially identified himself, and of the admission of Catholics to Parliament which Ponsoby had very recently declared to be a political necessity. According to the Whig view, the management of Ireland had been offered without reservation to them as one of the terms of the coalition. The right of appointing to offices in Ireland naturally belonged to the Lord Lieutenant and the Home Secretary, and they had also the right of removing and pensioning off officials who were opposed to their policy. Without this power, the offer which had been made to them would be wholly futile and the management of Ireland would be impossible.

A quarrel soon broke out in England which threatened to put an end to the Coalition. Portland complained that the appointment of Fitzwilliam seemed

indefinitely adjourned, and that when the Whig leaders consented that it should not take place till a vacancy had been found for Lord Westmorland, they assumed that Pitt would take some steps to secure that end. Pitt, on the other hand, was evidently alarmed by the reports from Ireland, which were intended to persuade him that the Ponsonbys would attain an overwhelming power, and that a new system of men and measures would take place. That something of the kind must have followed the promotion to the first place in the Irish Government, in a time of extreme and feverish popular excitement, of a nobleman who was perfectly well known to be in favour of parliamentary reform and Catholic Emancipation, and who had declared his intention of relying chiefly on the Irish politicians who were specially identified with these measures, was indeed sufficiently evident, but it does not appear to have been foreseen by Pitt, or at least he had begun to fear that it was likely to be carried to a point much beyond what he had anticipated. He most positively and emphatically declared that he would not consent to the removal of Fitzgibbon. 'I am confirmed,' Pitt wrote to Windham, 'in the impossibility either of consenting to the Chancellor's removal or of leaving either him or any of the supporters of the Government exposed to the risk of a new system.' 'Besides the impossibility of sacrificing any supporters of Government and exposing them to the risk of a new system, I ought to add that the very idea of a new system (as far as I understand what is meant by that term), and especially one formed without previous communication or concert with the rest of the King's servants here or with the friends of Government in Ireland, is in itself what I feel it, utterly impossible to accede to.'

In a memorandum which he drew up, but appar-



ently only for his own use, he states that the best thing that could happen would be that Fitzwilliam should not go to Ireland, but if he did go, it must be on the understanding that 'all idea of a new system of measures or of new principles of government in Ireland, as well as of any separate and exclusive right to conduct the departments of Ireland differently from any other in the King's service, must be disclaimed and relinquished,' and that 'complete security must be given that Lord Fitzgibbon and all the supporters of Government shall not be displaced on the change, nor while they continue to act fairly in the support of such a system as shall be approved in England.' As Burke at this time wrote, Portland and Fitzwilliam had undoubtedly believed that a very large discretion was committed to them in the administration of Ireland, and they had proceeded as if there was no controversy whatever on the subject, while 'it seems Mr. Pitt had no thought at all of a change in the Irish Government, or if he had, it was dependent on Lord Westmorland's sense of the fitness of some other office to accommodate him on his resignation.'<sup>1</sup>

After long disputes extending over some weeks the quarrel was at last appeased. Lord Westmorland was made Master of the Horse, and Lord Fitzwilliam became Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, where he arrived on January 4, 1795. He agreed that Fitzgibbon was not to be removed from the Chancellorship and that no general change of men was to take place. It is most

<sup>1</sup> So Grattan wrote (Oct. 27, 1794) to a private friend: 'Mr. Pitt don't agree to those extensive powers which we were taught to believe the Duke of Portland had. However, I should not be surprised if it

were settled well at last and that Lord Fitzwilliam went over; nor yet would the contrary surprise me. This week will decide.' *Grattan's Life*, iv. 179.

inexcusable that after all that happened he should not have received, or should not have exacted, precise written instructions; but so it was, and the whole business seems to have been transacted by conversations which soon gave rise to misunderstandings. The terms of the Viceroyalty seem to have been chiefly settled at a Cabinet meeting shortly before the departure of Fitzwilliam for Ireland, at which Fitzwilliam, Pitt, Portland, Spencer, Windham and Grenville were present, and after the quarrel that took place Lord Grenville drew up a Memorandum,<sup>1</sup> which appears to have been read and sanctioned by all his colleagues except Fitzwilliam, embodying his recollections of what had taken place. It was written when the quarrel had broken out and therefore some time after the conversation, and it was written for the purpose of justifying the ministers who recalled Fitzwilliam; but though these things may have affected, somewhat, its colouring and its emphasis, there can be no doubt about its substantial accuracy.

There were two great questions to be considered—the question of patronage and the question of measures. The first, in the eyes of history, seems a very small one, but there is strong reason to believe that it is that which really governed the whole transaction, and filled by far the largest part in the minds of the ministers. On this subject two things seem to have been accepted on both sides. One was that Fitzgibbon must, under no circumstances, be removed. The other was that there was to be no general change of men, and that old

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<sup>1</sup> This is stated in the copy of the first draft of the Memorandum in the *Grenville Papers* at Dropmore. *Dropmore Papers* (Hist. MSS. Commission), iii. 35–39. Grenville adds that there is a corrected

copy with an addition by Pitt. A copy of it will be found in the *Pelham Papers* in the British Museum (*Add. MSS.* 33, 118). Lord Ashbourne has printed a large part of it in his work on Pitt.

supporters of the Government were not to be vindictively treated. Some change, however, was clearly contemplated. Fitzwilliam, the Memorandum states, gave an explicit assurance 'that he had not in view the establishment of any new system in Ireland, but that he was desirous of strengthening his Government by the accession of Mr. Ponsonby and his friends, and the support of Mr. Grattan.' It was agreed that the two Ponsonby brothers were to have places in the Government, and that Wolfe and Toler, the Attorney and Solicitor General, were ultimately to be removed, but not until or unless offices were provided for them such as they would have accepted under Westmorland.

There was some conversation about the appointment to the Primacy and the Provostship of Trinity College, but the only question on which any serious division appeared was about the increase of the Revenue Board by Lord Buckingham, one of the measures for augmenting Government influence in the House of Commons which Grattan had most constantly denounced. Fitzwilliam said that some of these offices should be abolished. Pitt and Grenville replied that they 'considered themselves parties to the measures of Lord Buckingham in Ireland, and could not on that account, independently of other considerations, concur in any measure which would appear to reflect on him.' Fitzwilliam disclaimed any such intention, but insisted that the Revenue Board ought to be remodelled and reduced. It was found, however, that none of the members of the Cabinet understood the matter in its details, and it was therefore agreed that it should be adjourned till Fitzwilliam was in Ireland, and that 'after his explicit disavowal of all intention to introduce a new system or to countenance imputations on the former Government, his colleagues would willingly leave it to him to con-

sider the subject, . . . desiring only that before any such measure was adopted they might have an opportunity of deliberating upon it.' Then follows a passage which is important as bearing on the chief cause of what afterwards took place. 'Nothing was intimated in this conversation of any idea of removing Mr. Beresford, nor was even his name mentioned by Lord Fitzwilliam, although the different means which might be adopted for lessening the number of the Commissioners of the Revenue Board formed a part of what he stated on the subject of those Boards.'

In the recently printed Carlisle papers there is a memorandum entitled 'Explanations settled between Mr. Grattan and Mr. Burke coming from Lord Fitzwilliam and the Chancellor,' which puts the same view in somewhat stronger terms. It appears to have been drawn up after a conversation between Burke, Grattan, Lord Loughborough and Fitzwilliam, which must have taken place on December 11, just before the departure of the Lord Lieutenant for Ireland.<sup>1</sup> The original is in the handwriting of Lord Loughborough, and it states that the words were settled in the course of the conversation, and carefully considered and sanctioned by Lord Fitzwilliam. It says that 'Lord Fitzwilliam's view was to support in Ireland the English Government, considering Mr. Pitt as the Prime Minister, without whom no material measure as to things or persons is to be concerted or done—not setting up a government of departments, but that each department acting under him should meet with its due and honourable support from him. No vindictive removals; those

<sup>1</sup> See *Grattan's Life*, iv. p. 181. In the *Carlisle Correspondence* it is attributed to March 1795, but this seems to

be conjectural, and the passage from *Grattan's Life* referred to gives a more probable date.

which may be necessary for convenience to be settled here by amicable concert. Misrepresentations and indiscretions may have effect on both sides; to wipe away all memory of them and to start as on new ground. To arrange in the best manner for the interest of both kingdoms the state of Ireland; for this purpose to meet as soon as possible.’<sup>1</sup>

It is evident that the latitude accorded to Fitzwilliam was not great; but at the same time, rightly or wrongly, he considered that some option in dealing with Irish officials remained to him. He had chosen his Chief Secretary, Lord Milton, after Grenville had declined the office, and no one appears to have made any objection to what he had done; and on his arrival in Ireland, in one of his very first replies to an address, he said: ‘It shall be my study to call to my councils those who are distinguished, and known for their wisdom, their integrity, and their talents, and who possess the confidence of his Majesty’s people.’<sup>2</sup> In order to make appointments, however, removals were necessary, and almost immediately after his arrival he removed three officials who, if not in the very front rank, had nevertheless much influence in the Government. These were Sackville Hamilton, who had for many years been Under Secretary, Cooke, who was Secretary for War, and John Beresford, who was Chief Commissioner of the Revenue.

The two first held posts which brought them into constant and very confidential relation with the Lord Lieutenant, and one of them at least, was among the bitterest enemies to his appointment. ‘Neither I nor my Chief Secretary,’ wrote Fitzwilliam, ‘with whom

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<sup>1</sup> The MSS. of the Earl of Carlisle (Hist. MSS. Commission), p. 722.

<sup>2</sup> *Grattan’s Life*, iv. 183.

they were in hourly intercourse, felt inclined to give them that confidence, or to suffer the business of their respective offices to be conducted on the system we found had been lately introduced there.' Of Cooke, Fitzwilliam said: 'His tone and style rendered his approach to a superior not to be supported.' Hamilton seems to have been contented with the compensation he received and to have made no complaint; but Cooke was one of the foremost in appealing to the English Government. He was compensated for the loss of his office by a life pension of 1,200*l.* a year, but he complained loudly of its inadequacy. He was an able man, strenuously opposed to the admission of Catholics into the Irish Parliament, and closely allied with Fitzgibbon and with Beresford, and he afterwards bore a considerable part in carrying the Union. It was to him that the Government of Lord Cornwallis entrusted the task of drawing up the anonymous pamphlet stating the case for the Union, which was the first measure taken to prepare public opinion for its reception.

The most important, however, of these removals was that of John Beresford, who, though his ostensible place in the Government was not very prominent, had a power out of all proportion either to his parliamentary ability or his official standing. He was a leading member of a family which was one of the two or three largest borough-owners in Ireland, and which at the same time had acquired so many great places in Church and State, and had established such powerful political connections, that it almost overshadowed the Government, and it was much doubted whether any Lord Lieutenant could long govern in opposition to it. John Beresford was connected by marriage with Fitzgibbon, and they were completely identified in politics. It was said a few years before by a good judge, that this party

undoubtedly governed the country, and John Beresford had obtained the nickname of the King of Ireland. Bitterly anti-Catholic and anti-reforming, he had seen with the utmost dislike the new change of government, and seems to have been from the first writing to England against it. He had helped Pitt in the question of the financial relations in 1785, and was in correspondence with other important members of the English administration as well as with the two last Irish Viceroys.

A man of this importance ought not, in my opinion, to have been removed from office without previous communication with England, but there had been a serious misunderstanding on the matter. Fitzwilliam states—and his veracity is beyond question, though his memory may have deceived him—that in his first conversation with Pitt he had expressly mentioned Beresford as one of the officials in Ireland he might have to remove, and that Pitt acquiesced by his silence. In the Memorandum of the Cabinet Council to which I have referred it is said: ‘It appears that Lord F. conceives himself to have stated to Mr. Pitt, in their first conversation on the subject of Ireland, that he was apprehensive Mr. Beresford must be removed, and that Mr. Pitt made no objection in reply to this. Mr. Pitt has no recollection of anything having been said to him which conveyed to his mind the impression that Mr. Beresford’s removal from his office was intended.’ In the Cabinet Council itself, as we have seen, the ministers were agreed that the name of Beresford had not been mentioned.

Fitzwilliam was probably quite right in his belief that the removal of a man with such power and of such disposition as Beresford was necessary, if his administration was to carry out a policy of conciliation. He maintained with great justice that his confidential ser-

vants ought to be men in whom he could confide, and that it was essential to the good government of Ireland that family cabals for monopolizing and controlling the Government should be broken. He did not act in a vindictive spirit, and has indeed been blamed for his excessive liberality. Beresford was relieved of his duties, but he retained his whole official income, and he received an assurance that no other member of his family should be removed. 'They were still left,' wrote Fitzwilliam, 'in the full enjoyment of more emoluments than ever were accumulated in any country upon any one family.' Fitzwilliam was, however, as it seems to me, wrong in acting without previously intimating his intention to the ministers in England. Pitt declared that he had not the most distant recollection of any hint of the removal of Beresford, and would certainly not have consented, and he described Fitzwilliam's act 'as an open breach of a most solemn promise.' Much stress was afterwards laid by Fitzgibbon on the fact that Fitzwilliam did not wait for any overt act of opposition, but announced his determination immediately on arriving in Ireland. The attitude and opinions of Beresford, however, were notorious, and if the removal was to be made at all, it was probably right that it should be done at once.

There is, I think, the strongest reason to believe that this not very important question of patronage was the main cause of the recall of Lord Fitzwilliam and of the terrible disasters which that recall unquestionably brought upon Ireland and upon the Empire. Fitzwilliam's appointment to the Viceroyalty of Ireland met with many ill-wishers even in England. Pitt cared for few things so much as for a monopoly of power, and in this matter he seems to have been much influenced by personal feelings and by the assertions that

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were made that Irish affairs would pass under Whig control. Dundas and Grenville from the beginning disliked the appointment. Buckingham and Westmorland, who were closely connected with the men and measures that seemed menaced in Ireland, and who, as late Lord Lieutenants, spoke with much authority, were at this time extremely active and constantly pressing the case of Beresford and Cooke upon the Government. Lord Auckland, who had much influence with Pitt, was on the same side, and a constant stream of letters to English statesmen were pouring in from Beresford, Fitzgibbon, and their colleagues.

To those who will carefully follow the course of the correspondence with Fitzwilliam, nothing is more remarkable than how, in the first stages of the difference, the complaints made from England of Fitzwilliam turned wholly, or almost wholly, on the removals in Ireland, and how in these early letters the Catholic question, on which Fitzwilliam had so earnestly written, was either altogether omitted or else treated as entirely subordinate. The question as it presented itself to English ministers and their allies in Ireland seems to have been mainly a question of whether the Beresfords or the Ponsonbys should have most influence. 'Let my friends no longer suffer the Catholic question to be mentioned,' wrote Fitzwilliam after his recall, 'as entering in the most distant degree into the causes of my recall. . . . Had Mr. Beresford never been dismissed . . . I should have remained.' 'In my opinion,' said George Ponsonby in the Irish Parliament, 'the Catholic question had no more to do with the recall of Lord Fitzwilliam than Lord Macartney's embassy to China.' Burke was of the same opinion. 'A certain family cabal,' he wrote to Grattan, 'are in the sole possession of the ear of Government; . . . security

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to their own jobbish power is the first and the last of the piece. The Catholic question is a mere pretence.'<sup>1</sup> It was not the first nor was it the last time in which ministers, both in England and Ireland, have sacrificed to mere questions of patronage and power the most vital interests of their country.

We must now turn to the side of these transactions which has a far more abiding interest. As we have seen, both Pitt and Dundas were men of decidedly liberal opinions on the subject of the removal of Catholic disabilities; in 1793 they had forced their views upon the bitterly hostile Government in Ireland, and as both Portland and Fitzwilliam held views much resembling those of Grattan there seemed much probability that the administration in England would be favourable to the completion of the work by the admission of Catholics to the Irish Parliament. As Burke says: 'As far as I could discover the substance of the thing was not much disrelished by the Government.'<sup>2</sup> At the same time it was the clear desire of the Government that the question should be, if possible, adjourned till the peace.

There is little real difference between the statements of the two parties on this question. Fitzwilliam in his letter to Lord Carlisle has stated in perfectly unambiguous terms his own version of what had taken place. 'I was decidedly of opinion,' he wrote, 'that not only sound policy but justice required, on the part of Great Britain, that the work which was left imperfect in 1793

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<sup>1</sup> *Grattan's Life*, iv. 202-204. See also his very important letters, pp. 199-202. Burke's opinion was not that of a mere outsider. He was at this time in close consultation

with at least four of the Cabinet ministers, and he had taken a very considerable part in the formation of the Coalition.

<sup>2</sup> *Grattan's Life*, iv. 204.

ought to be completed, and the Catholics relieved from every remaining disqualification. In this opinion the Duke of Portland uniformly concurred with me; and when the question came under discussion previous to my departure for Ireland, I found the Cabinet, with Mr. Pitt at their head, strongly impressed with the same conviction. Had I found it otherwise I never would have undertaken the government. I at first proposed that if the additional indulgences should be offered from the Throne the very best effects would be secured . . . but to this proposal objections were stated that appeared of sufficient weight to induce the adoption of another plan. I consented not to bring the question forward on the part of Government, but rather to endeavour to keep back until a period of more general tranquillity, when so many material objects might not press upon the Government; but as the principle was agreed on, and the necessity of its being brought into full effect was universally allowed, it was at the same time resolved that if the Catholics should appear determined to stir the business and to bring it before Parliament, I was to give it a handsome support on the part of Government.'

To a very similar effect was the statement of Fitzwilliam in the House of Lords. 'Yielding to the argument of not wishing to entangle Government in difficulties upon that subject at that period, I admit that under orders, clearly understood by me, not to give rise to or bring forward the question of Catholic Emancipation on the part of Government, I assumed the government of Ireland. But in yielding to this argument I entered my protest against resisting the question if it should be brought forward from any other quarter; and I made most distinct declarations that in case of its being so brought forward it should receive my full sup-

port. With these declarations I assumed the government of Ireland. This I state upon my honour.'

If we now turn to the Cabinet Memorandum, we shall find the Government view of the controversy. The passage in the corrected version relating to the course which was to be pursued by Fitzwilliam in dealing with public measures is considerably altered and expanded from the original draft of Grenville, and there is good reason to believe that in its final form it was from the pen of Pitt. The reader will observe that, while it appears from it that the questions of patronage were largely discussed, the Catholic question was so lightly touched upon that some of the ministers appear even to have forgotten that it was mentioned.

'It was understood that on all important subjects Lord F. should transmit all the information he could collect, with his opinion, to the King's servants here, and that he should do nothing to commit the King's Government in such cases without fresh instructions from hence. It is also distinctly recollected by *some*<sup>1</sup> of the persons present that the Catholic question was particularly mentioned, though not discussed at much length; that no decided sentiment was expressed by anyone as to the line which it might be right ultimately to adopt; but that the same general principles before stated were considered as applying to this as to the other questions of importance, and that a strong opinion was stated that Lord Fitzwilliam should, if possible, prevent the agitation of the question at all during the present session.'

The line prescribed to Lord Fitzwilliam on the Catholic question is therefore not difficult to understand. He was himself a believer in the expediency of

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<sup>1</sup> Italics are mine.

admitting the Catholics to Parliament, and the ministers he represented shared his opinion that such a measure must be ultimately carried; but he was instructed not to bring it forward as a ministerial measure; and to do his best to prevent it from being discussed during the ensuing session in the Irish Parliament. If possible the question should be postponed until the peace. If this were not possible, he was to take no step that would commit the Government without further instructions, but was to collect and transmit all information on the subject for their consideration.

When Fitzwilliam arrived in Ireland he found that measures had already been taken by the Catholics to bring the question forward as soon as Parliament met; that there was a full determination to bring it forward, and that a petition to be presented to Parliament was actually drawn up. He appears at once to have done the utmost in his power to carry out his instructions to procure the postponement of the question. Lord Kenmare, Lord Fingall, and the other gentlemen who with them had seceded from the Catholic Committee, represented the most Conservative section of the Catholic body, and the two peers I have mentioned had long been the most influential guides of Catholic policy. Fitzwilliam lost no time in putting himself into communication with them. He found them anxious to abstain from any measure that could embarrass the Government, but quite clear that it was utterly impossible to put the question of Catholic Emancipation aside. All the Catholics, he said, 'not only the Dublin Committee but also the seceders, the noblemen and gentlemen of landed property,' were looking forward to it. Whether the Government wished it or not, the question would most certainly be brought forward as soon as the Parliament assembled.

‘I was no sooner landed,’ he wrote, ‘and informed of the real state of things here than I found that this question would force itself upon my immediate consideration.’ Only four days after his arrival in Ireland, he wrote to Portland: ‘I tremble about the Catholics. I mean about keeping them quiet for the session, because I find the question already in agitation, and a committee appointed to bring forward a petition for the repeal of the penal and restrictive laws. I will immediately use what efforts I can to stop the progress of it, and bring them back to the confidence in the good intentions of the Government, and relying on that to defer for the present agitating the question.’ Addresses from the Catholics were at once presented to him, and he described to the Government the spirit in which he replied. ‘I have endeavoured to keep clear of any engagement whatever, though there is nothing in my answer that they can construe into a rejection of what they are *all* looking forward to, the repeal of the remaining penal and restrictive laws.’

In all this Lord Fitzwilliam seems to me to have acted with perfect propriety, nor is there, I believe, any ground for the accusation which was subsequently brought against him of having encouraged the agitation he was instructed to repress. He went to Ireland with a sincere desire to postpone the question. He at once adopted the means which were best calculated to attain the object; when he perceived that this was hopeless, he gave the Government the fullest and promptest information about the situation, and he was only discharging his plain duty when he transmitted to them his own conviction that ‘not to grant cheerfully on the part of the Government all the Catholics wish would not only be exceedingly impolitic but perhaps dangerous.’ The condition of Ireland appeared

to him to be far worse than English statesmen believed. The administration of justice in all its departments was miserably feeble and miserably corrupt, and organised outrages were spreading rapidly through many counties. The Defender outrages, carried on with almost perfect impunity, were in their origin rather agrarian than political; but the Defenders were fast learning to look forward to French assistance and internal revolution as the means of obtaining their ends, and they were ultimately absorbed in the United Irish movement. The whole body of the Roman Catholics of the lower orders were in the judgment of Fitzwilliam sullen, discontented or openly disaffected, and there was the strongest reason to believe that a French landing would be generally welcomed.

The successful invasion of Holland took place a few days after Fitzwilliam arrived in Ireland, and by placing the Dutch ports in French hands it immensely increased the probability of a descent upon Ireland. Everyone believed that there was great danger of such a descent, and this belief had a powerful and immediate effect upon Irish politics. Fitzwilliam himself wrote to England that he considered it imminent, and that the defence of Ireland depended mainly on the attitude of the Catholics. The upper orders of the Catholics were in his opinion thoroughly and actively loyal, and the upper section of their middle classes were at least negatively so; but these last 'have certainly shown no forwardness to check these outrages and to reconcile the affections of the lowest, which is to be imputed and can be imputed to no other cause than that there is something left behind that rankles in their bosoms. They conceive, as they express themselves, that they are marked people, but this done away . . . I feel confident of their zealous and hearty support in the worst of exigencies.'

Lord Fingall, who could speak about Catholic opinion with great authority, emphatically confirmed the opinion of the Viceroy that the continuance of the disabilities lay at the root of most Catholic disaffection. Lord Shannon was one of the most powerful opponents of the admission of Catholics to Parliament, and he always voted against that measure; but when Fitzwilliam consulted him confidentially on the subject, while expressing his decided opinion that the question ought, if possible, to be postponed, he added that if this was not possible, the Government ought not to resist it. Fitzgibbon was now, as ever, an uncompromising opponent of the admission of Catholics to Parliament, but he frankly acknowledged that if the Government wished to carry the measure, they could easily do so. In the Protestant community there were no signs of opposition. Fitzwilliam found that many of those who had been most opposed to the concession of 1793 were now favourable to complete emancipation. They contended that after all that had been given, it was folly to oppose the completion of the work at the cost of maintaining the old exasperation, while the extremely dangerous condition of the country made them feel that every step should be taken that could strengthen the Conservative influence. One measure, the most competent members of the Irish Government, including Fitzgibbon himself, considered indispensable. It was the formation of an armed constabulary drawn from the better class of the people, and securing the peace of the country. The existing police were utterly inefficient, and it was impossible to entrust this duty to the army or the volunteers. 'But of what description of men,' asked Fitzwilliam, 'must this constabulary be composed?' 'Of the first tenants—that is, the middlemen between the landlord and the tenant. Who are they,



and what are they? In three provinces all Catholics. Shall we wait till they have arms in their hands and then grant them their requests, or shall we begin by making them content and then confide in them?’

It is possible to contend that Fitzwilliam exaggerated the dangers of the situation, and that he might by a firm policy have postponed Catholic Emancipation; but he is certainly not to be blamed for bringing before his colleagues his view of the question, and for urging upon them, as he did in letter after letter, that some new instructions must be given, and given without delay. When Parliament met, the whole question would necessarily come into discussion, and the Government would be obliged to take its line. It is not true, as has sometimes been alleged, that Fitzwilliam ignored the position of Pitt as Prime Minister. He acted with perfect propriety in addressing his letters to the Duke of Portland as the minister who was directly in charge of Ireland; but he at the same time urgently begged Portland at once to bring the whole matter before Pitt. Parliament was to meet on January 22, and it was vitally necessary that in the short time that elapsed before that event some new instructions should be sent to guide him from England.

It seems an almost incredible thing, but it is the simple truth, that the English ministers sent him no instructions whatever. As early as January 8—that is, four days after his arrival in Ireland—he had, as we have seen, distinctly informed them that the Catholics had already resolved to bring their case by a petition before Parliament, that it was exceedingly improbable he could succeed in obtaining its postponement, and that if he could not do so it was, in his judgment, wise to acquiesce in it. On January 15, after his interview with the most moderate wing of the Catholic gentry,

and after a fuller experience of the condition of the country, and of the force and trend of public opinion, he wrote in the most urgent and solemn terms to Portland, representing the absolute impossibility of preventing the question from coming before Parliament in the ensuing session, and his own firm conviction of the extreme danger of putting off a concession which he, like the ministers at home, believed to be ultimately inevitable. 'All this,' he wrote, 'I submit to your consideration; no time is to be lost; the business will presently be at hand, and the first step I take is of infinite importance (pray do not delay to talk with Pitt on the subject). If I receive no very peremptory directions to the contrary, I shall acquiesce with a good grace in order to avoid the manifest ill-will of a doubt or the appearance of hesitation, for in my opinion even the appearance of hesitation may be mischievous to a degree beyond all calculation.'

Assuming that this policy was not in accordance with the wishes of the English ministers, it was surely their manifest duty to have said so at once, and either to have postponed the meeting of Parliament, or at least indicated before Parliament met the line they wished to be adopted. But the reply of Portland to Fitzwilliam's letter of the 8th made no reference whatever to the Catholic question, and was chiefly concerned with the promotion of the Attorney-General Wolfe to the peerage, and two, if not three, letters arrived in Dublin, after the letter of January 15 had been received, without a word of instruction on the Catholic question, and without the smallest indication that the Government disapproved of the course which Fitzwilliam had announced it to be his intention to pursue.

In the meantime Parliament met, and the position of the Viceroy was most perplexing. He could not

adopt Fitzgibbon's policy of uncompromising opposition to Catholic Emancipation. Such a course would have been in absolute contradiction not only to his own convictions, but to the instructions of the ministers in England who were in principle in favour of that emancipation, and who had declared themselves ready to yield to it if it were pressed, though they had directed him, as a matter of temporary expediency, to prevent the question from being agitated at all. He had tried to do this and had absolutely failed; and the greatly increased probability of invasion had added vastly to the urgency and the danger of the question. After his own representation to the ministry that any delay or hesitation in meeting the unanimous Catholic demand might have a fatal effect on the tranquillity of Ireland and on the possibility of successfully resisting invasion; after the complete silence with which his announcement, that if he received no further orders he would acquiesce in a measure which he had found it impossible to keep out of parliamentary discussion, he could not without distinct and imperative instructions meet Parliament with a declaration that at least during the present session he would resist any Catholic legislation. The course which he adopted under these circumstances appears to me to have been the best. Previous to his arrival the Catholics had placed their case in the hands of Grattan, who had always been their strongest supporter. He was not in office, and could therefore act with much independence; but he was an avowed and powerful supporter of the Government; he had, as we have seen, been consulted on its formation; he was in close alliance with some of its chief Irish members, and he was thus exceptionally fitted to carry on a negotiation between the Government and the Catholics. Fitzwilliam determined to take him into his confidence and

to acquiesce in his giving notice of a measure for the relief of the Catholics, provided the terms of this measure were kept secret till they had been laid before the English Cabinet and had received its approval. By acting in this way he secured for the Cabinet an opportunity for discussing, and, if necessary, modifying the measure; he kept it in the hands of a man who was thoroughly to be trusted, and he avoided the great danger of its being taken up by some member who might desire rather to embarrass than to assist the Government, and who might very easily have deprived them of all the credit of the concession. There was no want of such members in the Irish House of Commons.

In accordance with his instructions, Fitzwilliam made no mention of a Catholic Bill in his speech in opening Parliament. He merely expressed his hope that in a time of great national danger 'the united strength and zeal of every description of subjects' would be elicited, and his own cordial affection 'to the whole of Ireland.' The House met in an excited and anxious mood, and two beliefs dominated all its discussions. The one was that a French invasion in the near future was extremely probable, and that all the energies of the nation would be required to resist it. The other was that the Catholic question was ripe for settlement and that the present session would witness its completion. The hopes of the Catholics were raised to the highest point. Petitions asking for their emancipation streamed in from all parts of Ireland, and it was a most significant fact that there was not an address to the Lord Lieutenant, not a petition to Parliament, on the other side. Individuals no doubt dreaded and disliked the measure, and the Government, by its overwhelming parliamentary influence, had the power to defeat it, but no fact in Irish history is clearer than that at this

time the great body of the Irish Protestants acquiesced in its expediency and its necessity, and that if the English ministry had supported it it would have been carried far more easily in 1795 than it afterwards was in 1829.

Both the conviction in the Irish Parliament of the extreme dangers of the situation, and the great popularity of the administration of Lord Fitzwilliam, were shown by the unexampled liberality of the votes for the defence of the Empire. As in 1782, Grattan took a leading part in the loyal movement. A vote of 200,000*l.* for the British navy was moved by him, and carried without a division. There had been no precedent for Ireland contributing to the cost of the navy since 1782, when a grant of half this amount had been proposed by Grattan. The military forces in Ireland were at the same time raised to above 40,000 men. There was almost absolute unanimity in the House of Commons on these questions, only two members opposing the address.

Some weeks, however, still followed before the Catholic question came to the front. Fitzwilliam evidently wished to delay it till he had obtained from his English colleagues answers to his letters; and Grattan, on this, as on nearly all occasions, acted with the utmost moderation. On the 28th of January, being still without instructions, Fitzwilliam again wrote on the importance of establishing a yeomanry cavalry; but suggested that it would be prudent to adjourn the measure, 'for should the Catholic question fail, we must think twice before we put arms into the hands of men newly irritated.' At the same time he assured the Government that there was no serious obstacle to emancipation to be encountered in the Irish Parliament, and that there was not the least doubt—and in this belief he was

confirmed by some of the most strenuous opponents of the measure—that Catholic Emancipation would pass without difficulty. The acquiescence of Protestant Ireland outside the House seemed to him equally certain. He had just received an address from the pre-eminently Protestant Corporation of Londonderry expressing their wish ‘to see all Ireland united in one interest.’

On February 10, being still left without instructions, he again wrote at large on the subject. It was impossible to delay the question any longer. The Catholic Committee, fully supported by Lord Kenmare and the seceding gentry, were resolved to bring it in at once, believing that its immediate settlement was essential to the security of the country. Fitzwilliam fully shared their view. If equality of rights between Protestants and Catholics was dangerous, that danger had been already incurred when the vast Catholic majority were brought into the electorate in 1793; but as long as the inequality affecting the upper order of Catholics was maintained, it would be made a pretext for the most formidable machinations, a constant subject of contention and animosity. In the face of the general disaffection and insubordination of the lower orders, it was absolutely necessary to secure the zealous and unanimous support of the upper orders of all creeds. ‘The whole united strength of the higher may be necessary to control and keep the lower in order. The time I believe propitious to the purpose. Not a single petition against it to the House of Commons from any Protestant body, though the subject has already been six weeks in agitation. Individuals who dislike it, and who perhaps from a desire of maintaining a line of consistency may say a feeble word against it, I believe have no intention to defeat it, and this

opinion they decidedly entertain, that if anything is to be done, the business should be completed and the question closed for ever. . . . The Catholics having put the business into the hands of Grattan, I have desired him not to proceed in it before his plan has been first laid before the Cabinet in London and his Majesty's pleasure taken on it. His plan is a short and simple one: a general repeal of all restrictive and disqualifying laws, and, that done, a complete change in the oath of disqualification. . . . It is upon the large principle of leaving not a point of distinction in rights and capacities between Protestants and Catholics that I propose, as I do, that no reserve should be made, not even of the highest offices of the State, not even the Seals nor the Bench.'

Any attempt, he continued, to circumscribe or oppose the measure would have effects of the worst description. It would leave a bone of contention in the future, and 'frustrate that great desideratum at this critical juncture, unanimity and harmony among all the higher orders of the kingdom. . . . Should we see an enemy landed upon our shore, the safety of the kingdom depends upon that, and that only.' 'Whatever may be thought necessary, if anything should be thought so, to guard and fence the Protestant succession and Protestant Church Establishment, that I would have done by an accompanying Bill.'

Grattan introduced the question on February 12, in the form of a motion for leave to bring in a Bill for the relief of his Majesty's Catholic subjects. His speech was short and studiously vague, and, in accordance with the wishes of Fitzwilliam, he carefully abstained from indicating the extent and nature of his proposal. Only two members, Ogle and Duigenan, expressed any opposition to the motion, and, as Fitzwilliam wrote, they

did not make the smallest impression on the House. 'Not a petition to the House of Commons,' repeated Fitzwilliam, 'not an address to me has yet come up against it [the Catholic concession] on the part of any Protestant body, but, on the contrary, the fair construction of some of their addresses has been an approbation of the measure. I hope the favourable opportunity of making the people of Ireland one people may not be lost.'

He once more implored the Cabinet not to hesitate about 'granting an equal participation of rights to Catholics to the full extent of what is proposed. Nothing short of it will produce the desirable end of a perfect harmony and a hearty unanimity in the general cause. I press it the more because I feel it not simply expedient, but necessary, and it is further necessary that a most gracious and unequivocal support should be given on the part of Government for two forcible reasons; first, that the measures may meet with no opposition, for nothing but the appearance of backwardness and reserve on the part of Government will raise an opposition; and the next is that Government may recover the confidence and affection of the Catholics. . . . I think myself fully authorised to decide for myself on the subject, but still, considering the extent proposed, I am desirous to have the mode considered in England in the present stage, while I hope it is still within my reach to have it limited and modified before the Bill itself is introduced, and before the plan is yet known to the Catholics themselves.'

And now for the first time—more than a month after Fitzwilliam had brought the urgency of the question before the Cabinet, nearly three weeks after Parliament had assembled; at a time when the extraordinary supplies had been voted, when Lord Fitzwilliam was



committed without recall, when the hopes of the Catholics had been raised to the highest point, and when petitions in favour of their emancipation were pouring in on every side—the first discordant notes were heard. They were at first not very decisive. About the 13th, Fitzwilliam received two letters from England, dated February 8 and 9.

One was from Pitt himself, and it is remarkable that it does not contain a word about that Catholic question which had become so transcendently important. It is simply concerned with questions of patronage, and especially with the removal of Beresford. Lord Fitzwilliam had repeatedly stated that in his first interview with Pitt about the arrangements in Ireland he had said that this would probably be necessary, and that Pitt had made no objection. Pitt acknowledged that Fitzwilliam had at different times mentioned apprehensions, which Pitt considered to be mistaken, of Mr. Beresford's supposed influence and power; but he added that he had no recollection of a proposal for removing him from the Revenue Board being hinted at even in the most distant manner, much less of doing so without his consent. It was never mentioned at the meeting of the members with Lord Fitzwilliam which took place before he went to Ireland, when all the other official arrangements were discussed. Had it been mentioned both Lord Grenville and himself would have strongly objected to it. They considered it inconsistent with the principle of protection to the servants of the Government. If it were done at all, it should only have been by direct authority from England, and it was a complete mistake to suppose, as Fitzwilliam had apparently done, that Beresford acquiesced either in his dismissal or in the terms that had been given him. The dismissal had been a peremptory step taken with-

out any previous discussion, and although the whole of his official income was continued to him, he was quite dissatisfied with the terms. 'He considers himself as forcibly turned out; and so far from consenting to any part of the arrangement, he demands that if he must quit his office, the proposed allowance should be secured him for life, which it is not, as I apprehend, in the power of the Government to do, and for which it is obviously impossible to recur to Parliament.' In other cases also Fitzwilliam seemed to have unduly pressed changes and acted in excess of the powers conferred on him.<sup>1</sup>

At the same time Portland broke his long silence on the Catholic question. In a letter of February 8 he peremptorily directed Fitzwilliam not to commit himself by any 'engagements,' or even by 'encouraging language,' to giving his countenance to the immediate adoption of a Bill in favour of the Catholics. And then followed a remarkable expression which was afterwards the subject of much discussion. The deferring it would be 'the means of doing a greater service to the British Empire than it had been capable of receiving since the Revolution, or at least since the Union.' Not the smallest notice was taken of the repeated declarations of Lord Fitzwilliam that on his arrival in Ireland he had done his best to defer the question, and that he had found it to be impossible.

Fitzwilliam could scarcely be said to have more than one course open to him. In his reply to Pitt he entered at large into the question of his dismissals, and concluded that Pitt must now choose between Beresford and himself. If the King's representative was not to be supported, he ought to be recalled.

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<sup>1</sup> *Stanhope Miscellanies*, pp. 19-23.

To Portland he observed with some sarcasm that it was to be lamented that while the urgency of the Catholic question appeared to those who were in Ireland to increase from hour to hour, in the eyes of the English ministers it seemed to get continually less, and that now for the first time since his arrival in Ireland he was asked to defer the measure to a future occasion. 'All I have to add,' he said, 'is that I will not be the person so to put it off on the part of Government. I will not be the person who, I verily believe, would by doing so raise a flame in the country that nothing short of arms would be able to keep down, nor to risk the issue of such an event.'<sup>1</sup>

The remainder of this correspondence need not greatly detain us. Before the reply of Fitzwilliam had time to arrive in England, he received new letters condemning in strong terms his precipitancy in permitting Grattan to introduce his motion, and declaring that nothing must now be done on the Catholic question. If it could possibly be deferred till the peace, this would be a great benefit. It was the first duty of Fitzwilliam to send over full statements of the arguments of all parties, including those who, like Fitzgibbon, were opposed to all concession. The Cabinet had not yet received the draft of the proposed Bill, and until a detailed plan was laid before them they could not recommend the King to give his consent. 'I am to inform your Excellency,' wrote Portland, 'in the plainest and most direct terms that we rely upon your zeal and influence to take the most effectual means in your power, to prevent any further proceedings being had on this Bill, until his Majesty's pleasure shall be signified to you with regard to your future conduct respect-

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<sup>1</sup> February 14, 1795. Fitzwilliam to Portland.

ing it.' In a long and confidential letter Portland now represented himself as wholly opposed to the admission of Catholics into Parliament. He feared that their numbers must ultimately give them a complete ascendancy; that the government of Ireland must pass into their hands, that the ecclesiastical Establishment in Ireland must be overthrown. The yeomanry forces in Catholic hands would add immeasurably to the danger, and with the increase of the regular forces which Parliament had voted it would probably be unnecessary. Perhaps as an alternative something might be done for the establishment of a seminary for the education and of a fund for the payment of priests. Fitzwilliam's refusal to adopt the policy of deferring the measure was equivalent to resignation, and he was authorised to appoint Lords Justices to carry on the government. He had committed himself much further than his instructions had justified.

It was, as I have said, the firm belief of Fitzwilliam and of those who were most closely connected with him in Ireland that his dismissal was not in reality due to his conduct on the Catholic question, but simply to the extreme and constant pressure that had been brought to bear upon Pitt in favour of Beresford and in hostility to Fitzwilliam. Lord Buckingham was bitterly aggrieved at the course Irish politics had taken, and had long been assailing the Government, and especially his own brother, Lord Grenville, with the most angry complaints. Lord Westmorland considered his system of government overthrown, and that he himself ought on his removal from Ireland to have been placed in the Cabinet. Lord Auckland detested Fitzwilliam; he was aggrieved at not having been included in the new arrangements when the Whig chiefs entered the Government, and he was a close ally of Beresford; and

Beresford and all Beresford's influential friends were unwearied in their hostility to Fitzwilliam.

There are, as we have seen, strong arguments in favour of this view, and, as I have already said, Fitzwilliam's dealings with Beresford do not appear to me to have been judicious. Much allowance must no doubt be made for his firm persuasion that Pitt had assented to the removal, if it were necessary, and it must be added that Fitzwilliam had formed a very unfavourable opinion of the character of Beresford. The grounds of this opinion rest upon some obscure transactions at the close of Lord Westmorland's government which it is not now possible fully to elucidate. Beresford's influence in the patronage department of that administration was exceedingly great, and it is certain that things were done which excited the gravest suspicion. Grattan declared in Parliament that Lord Westmorland had granted 'the reversion of every capital employment in the kingdom after his successor had been appointed; and that during his administration fourteen new employments had been created and thirteen reversions granted away.'<sup>1</sup> Fitzwilliam in a confidential letter to Portland wrote: 'I find myself in a very awkward predicament with respect to certain acts of my predecessor, because they are of a nature, tendency, and effect that I think I should ill do my duty to H.M. if I permitted them to remain unrescinded. Within the course of the last six months of Lord Westmorland's administration he has in several instances revoked the letters patent of several offices; he did this for the purpose of renewing the patents, and of adding thereto a second name in addition to the first; the additional person entering into a specific or an implied engage-

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<sup>1</sup> *Grattan's Speeches*, iii. 207. See too *Grattan's Life*, iv. 180.

ment with the original patentee not to interfere either in the duty, the profit, or in anything relative to the office during the life of the original holder. The effect of this manœuvre, if permitted to stand unrevoked, is the virtual grant of a reversion. The power of granting reversions is reserved by H.M. to himself.' If this practice is accredited, Fitzwilliam says, the Crown would be deprived of much of its patronage. He gives, as an instance, the case of Lord Downshire's patent for the Register of the Court of Chancery which Lord Westmorland had revoked, restoring it with the names of his two infant children, and thus depriving the Crown for three lives of a place of 1,500*l.* a year. The patent of Sir Lucius O'Brien's Clerkship of the Hanaper was also revoked, much, it appears, against the wishes of Sir Lucius, and then re-granted with the additional name of Lord Glentworth, a quite young man.<sup>1</sup>

It appears, however, from a letter of Pitt that Lord Glentworth's office had been given in accordance with some promise made in England, and that Pitt approved of the transaction.<sup>2</sup> How far Beresford was concerned in these matters it is impossible to say, but he and his brother commissioners were accused of some transaction in the sale of a public lease to a man named Ottiwell which excited so much reprobation or suspicion that, according to Fitzwilliam, Lord Westmorland took measures to bring about an unexpected and speedy prorogation of Parliament with the special object of preventing a parliamentary inquiry.<sup>3</sup> In his letter to Lord

<sup>1</sup> Fitzwilliam to Portland, Jan. 23, 1795.

<sup>2</sup> *Stanhope Miscellanies*, pp. 18, 22.

<sup>3</sup> Writing privately and confidentially to Portland about Beresford, Fitzwilliam

says: 'When Government is under the necessity of surreptitiously proroguing a session of Parliament in order to prevent inquiry being instituted into particular subjects, it must be something very like

Carlisle, which appears to have been printed for private circulation but was published after his resignation, Lord Fitzwilliam incautiously made this statement as one of the reasons for dismissing Beresford: 'I clearly saw that if I had connected myself with him it would be connecting myself with a person labouring under heavy suspicions, and subjecting my government to all the opprobrium and unpopularity attendant upon his maladministration. . . . I decided not to cloud the dawn of my administration by leaving in such power and authority so much imputed malversation.'

Such language should not have been used without the clearest evidence, and afterwards, when a duel between Fitzwilliam and Beresford had been arranged and interrupted, Fitzwilliam made an apology which appears to me exceedingly inconclusive, but which Beresford accepted as sufficient. It was that the letter to Lord Carlisle had never been intended for publication; and that 'the expressions which he used arose from impressions he had received from those he conversed with, and were not intended to injure or to relate to' Beresford's 'private character.'<sup>1</sup> In Ireland

prudence not to leave Government liable to the same sort of improper proceeding, for in the second instance the attack would justly be against Government itself for not having taken warning by the first. Look back to Lord Westmorland's letters at the close of the last session. You will find him urging the return of the Bills that he might get the Parliament *unexpectedly prorogued* for the express reason I state. Inquire what the causes and who the party: you will

find the extraordinary sale of a public lease the cause—Beresford the party. I do not mean that it is so stated in Lord W.'s letters—but that it is the fact; ground sufficient for common prudence to dictate a suspension of confidence, and I must think it rather a fortunate circumstance for the party, that the removal will be attributed to other motives.' Feb. 13, 1795.

<sup>1</sup> This is the statement of Beresford; *Beresford Correspondence*, ii. 118.

the suspicion that Beresford had been guilty of corrupt, or at least improper, conduct was so strong that in the succeeding administration a Committee of the House of Commons was appointed to inquire into the whole transaction. No report of its proceedings, as far as I know, exists, and very little can be confidently said about it. It continued for twenty-nine days. Beresford says that the conductors of the business 'acted throughout with the utmost malice;' that two witnesses were brought forward who perjured themselves; that one of these was reported to the House and would probably be sent to Newgate, but that the evidence given by the other was of such a character that the Committee did not think it proper to report it.'<sup>1</sup> Pelham, in a secret and confidential letter, mentions the 'unpleasant impression' produced by the refusal of Ottiwell, who was a principal person in the sale, to give evidence before the Committee,<sup>2</sup> and it appears to have been for a time thought that things were going against Beresford.<sup>3</sup> Ultimately, however, the Committee entirely acquitted him and his brother Commissioners of any corrupt or dishonest conduct, though it pronounced that they had exceeded their legal powers, and that an Act of Parliament was required to ratify the sale,<sup>4</sup> and

<sup>1</sup> *Beresford Correspondence*, p. 120-121.

<sup>2</sup> Pelham to Portland, March 30, 1795.

<sup>3</sup> *Beresford Correspondence*, ii. 123.

<sup>4</sup> Resolutions: (1) 'That it is opinion of this Committee that the Commissioners of wide streets in their bargain with Henry Ottiwell acted fairly and honourably to the best of their judgment, for the public advantage.

(2) 'That it is the opinion of this Committee that the Commissioners of wide streets in agreeing with the said Henry Ottiwell to demise grounds not actually in their possession exceeded their powers.

(3) 'That it is the opinion of this Committee that it is expedient to bring in a Bill to ascertain the powers of these said Commissioners and to ratify certain grants heretofore



such an Act was accordingly passed.<sup>1</sup> In the absence of any fuller information we may on this obscure question accept the verdict of the Committee, though I think it can hardly be denied that the transaction was open to an amount of suspicion which might have reasonably influenced the mind of Lord Fitzwilliam.

Putting aside this question of patronage and looking on the broad political question which was at issue, I see no sufficient reason for condemning the steps which he had taken, while the negligence of the Government to give him instructions and the circumstances of his recall seem to me wholly indefensible. In judging the Irish policy of Pitt the Fitzwilliam episode is of vital importance, and the very able biographers and panegyrists of Pitt have, in consequence, been unsparing in their condemnation of Fitzwilliam. It is plain that he was not a man of perfect judgment and tact. In what he said and wrote after his recall he exhibited an excessive, though by no means inexcusable, irritation, and he has been justly blamed for having permitted the passage I have already cited from a confidential letter to Portland, which was almost universally regarded as foreshadowing an intended legislative union, to appear in print. But his letters on the Catholic question appear to me not only excellent specimens of political reasoning, but also eminently wise and prescient in the policy they advocate. It was not his fault that the admission of Catholics to Parliament had risen to the foremost place in Irish politics. He justly saw

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made by the said Commissioners.'—*Irish Commons Journals*, March 14, 1796. Beresford, in a letter to Lord Auckland, described this report as an unqualified acquit-

tal, but makes no mention whatever of the second and third resolutions.'—*Beresford Correspondence*, ii. 120.

<sup>1</sup> 36 Geo. III. c. 54.

that after the vast ignorant Catholic democracy had been brought into the electorate, in 1793, the exclusion from Parliament of the small body of loyal Catholic gentry was not only useless and futile but exceedingly dangerous, as keeping up an enduring cause of irritation, and at the same time weakening an invaluable influence of leadership and control. He recognised far more clearly than statesmen in England the critical condition of Ireland through the rapidly growing disaffection of the lower orders, stimulated by the prospect of invasion; and he saw not less clearly that one of those rare opportunities had arisen which so seldom occur in the history of nations, when a great, dangerous, and most contentious question might have been promptly settled with the approval, or, at least, the acquiescence of all parties. It is difficult to exaggerate the evil brought upon Ireland by the long postponement of Catholic Emancipation; by the religious animosities it produced; by the mismanagement of the question at the time of the Union; by the protracted agitation under O'Connell breaking down the influence of the Catholic gentry, and throwing the leadership of the people into sacerdotal hands; by the precedent which was then established of a great measure carried through agitation and intimidation, by ministers who had pledged themselves to resist it. All this would have been wholly, or in a large measure, averted if the policy of Fitzwilliam had prevailed. In his own emphatic words, the disqualifications that were retained in the Act of 1793 'gave satisfaction to none, and caused discontent to many. The Protestants regarded these exceptions with total indifference. The Catholics looked on them as signs of suspicion and degradation.' He found their removal to be 'ardently desired by the Roman Catholics, to be asked for by very many Prot-

estants, and to be cheerfully acquiesced in by nearly all.'

No Irish writer or speaker, so far as I am aware, doubted the power of the Irish Government to carry the Bill, or that the real obstacle came not from Ireland but from the ministers in England. They acted in defiance of the clearest warnings. Fitzwilliam had solemnly assured them that in the very critical state of Ireland it would be madness to dash to the ground the Catholic hopes. He told them that such a step would almost certainly lead to rebellion and 'raise a flame in the country that nothing but the force of arms could keep down,' and the same view was expressed in the strongest terms both inside and outside Parliament by the most experienced and sagacious judges in Ireland. Among the number was Lord Charlemont, who had all his life been in principle opposed to the Catholic claims, but who now declared that the recall of Lord Fitzwilliam would be ruinous to Ireland, and foretold that by the following Christmas the people might be in the hands of the United Irishmen. The consternation and indignation in Parliament were so great that in the House of Commons, which had a few weeks before been so unanimous in supporting the Government, a proposal was now made for limiting the supplies to six months. The feelings of the nation were manifested with an intensity that had not been displayed since 1782. The shops of Dublin were closed; votes of confidence in the disgraced Lord Lieutenant were passed unanimously by both Houses of Parliament, by most of the corporations in the kingdom, and by innumerable county meetings. His carriage was drawn to the water's edge by an enthusiastic crowd, while a violent riot marked the entry of his successor. The belief in the possibility of obtaining reform by constitutional means

speedily waned. A sullen, menacing disloyalty overspread the land, 'creeping,' in the words of Grattan, 'like the mist at the heels of the countryman.'

It has been argued by the defenders of Pitt that the recall of Lord Fitzwilliam was a much less serious thing than has been represented, and that although the anarchy and the rebellion he predicted did actually take place, they would have done so equally if his administration had never existed. The ulterior and most disastrous consequences of the long delay of Catholic Emancipation which I have just enumerated cannot, I think, be reasonably disputed. Looking at the immediate consequences, I am inclined to agree that the rebellion, in the closing years of the century, was not likely to have been wholly averted by any policy the British Government could have pursued. The letters of Fitzwilliam himself bear abundant testimony to the widespread disaffection of the lower classes of the people, and under the influence of the French Revolution, of the great war, and of the prospect of a French invasion, all the elements of turbulence and disorder were fast assuming a political and treasonable character. All that can be truly said is that in a most critical moment, when the judgments of many were suspended or divided, the recall of Lord Fitzwilliam vastly aggravated the situation. Hopes were raised to the highest point and then suddenly disappointed. The belief in the possibility of peaceful and constitutional reform was fatally impaired. The passions that lead to civil and religious war received a new and powerful stimulus, and the chances of uniting all the upper and middle classes on the side of an active loyalty, and of kindling a feeling of genuine gratitude to the Government were greatly diminished.

Some of the organisers of the United Irish move-

ment had from the first aimed at separation, and would never have been conciliated, but a large number would have been contented by a democratic reform accompanied by Catholic Emancipation. It is a significant fact that one of the first pieces of secret information sent to England by the Chief Secretary Pelham in the succeeding administration was that, upon the recall of Lord Fitzwilliam, some of the most active United Irishmen had come 'to despair of anything effectual without the assistance of the French,' and were contemplating 'an embassy to Paris, if the Catholic question should be lost in the Irish Parliament.' In the memorandum describing the history of the society, drawn up by the United Irish leaders after the rebellion, they say: 'Whatever progress this United system had made among the Presbyterians of the north, it had as we apprehend made but little way among the Catholics throughout the kingdom until after the recall of Earl Fitzwilliam.'

Another argument upon which much stress has been placed is that Fitzwilliam's recall was fully acquiesced in by his own friends—the great seceding Whig nobles who had joined the Government of Pitt, and at whose desire he had been sent to Ireland. It is probable that the real determination of their conduct rested with Portland who was the minister at the head of Irish affairs, who had sent over Fitzwilliam to Ireland, and who had been in direct official communication with him. Both Fitzwilliam and Grattan considered the conduct of the Whig section of the Government very shameful—but the force of the argument derived from it would have been greater had Portland been a man of any superiority of intellect and character. He was, however, just of the type that would look upon the question merely as a question of patronage, and on this

question Fitzwilliam was probably wrong. He no doubt fully concurred in the wish of Pitt that the Catholic question should be postponed to the peace, and he could hardly take a part in favour of Fitzwilliam without condemning himself, for the extreme danger of the crisis was largely due to his own tardiness in answering the letters of Fitzwilliam. Portland was said to have been a somewhat timid man, overawed by the vastly superior powers of Pitt, and it was scarcely probable that under these circumstances he would have taken a line which might in a period of great danger have broken up the Coalition.

It is very probable that the delay of the English ministers in answering Fitzwilliam had no deeper cause than the negligence and procrastination which is so often found in English statesmanship. The period was one of extreme foreign danger. Pitt himself, in his letter to Fitzwilliam on February 9, apologises for not having before written on the ground that the state of business had not left him the time to do so.<sup>1</sup> At a moment when Holland was overrun by the French army, and when every day the chances of invasion seemed more grave, Ireland and its internal concerns probably held but a small place in the ministerial perspective, and there was no desire to take any great decision or embark upon the embarrassments of any new policy. It is to my mind inconceivable that Pitt should have desired, as some Irish writers pretend, to throw Ireland at such a moment into a rebellion. It is by no means inconceivable that he should have regarded the representations of Fitzwilliam and of the members of the Irish Parliament as exaggerations which might be safely neglected, especially as it had long been a main

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<sup>1</sup> *Stanhope Miscellanies*, p. 22.

object of many of his most influential friends and supporters to deepen the distrust which he had already conceived of his Irish Lord Lieutenant. Unfortunately the results only too fully justified the previsions of Lord Fitzwilliam, and it is probably no exaggeration to say that no event which took place in this memorable year affected the permanent welfare of the British Empire as much as his recall. The chief supporters of Fitzwilliam both in England and Ireland endeavoured without success to obtain from the ministers a definite statement of the reasons for what had been done, and Fitzwilliam, supported by the Duke of Norfolk, brought the question before the British House of Lords, but in both countries the ministers entrenched themselves behind the undoubted prerogative of the sovereign to recall his servants, and refused to give any explanation.<sup>1</sup>

By the directions of the Cabinet, Camden, the new Viceroy, opened the next session of the Irish Parliament without any King's Speech, and the Chief Secretary carefully avoided all disclosures about the past. A motion, however, of Grattan for a committee to inquire into the state of the nation produced an interesting debate in the Irish House of Commons. George Ponsonby declared 'of his own knowledge that Lord Fitzwilliam had done nothing and intended to do nothing for which he had not received full powers from the British Cabinet;' that 'he had received the most explicit and full powers to carry every measure which he proposed, and that without them he would never have taken upon

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<sup>1</sup> I may here remind my reader that I have written the history of the Fitzwilliam episode very fully in my history of Ireland, where references to all authorities on the subject, as well as much more copious

extracts from the letters relating to it, will be found. A few points, however, chiefly suggested by recent criticism, are more fully elucidated in the present sketch.

him the government of the country;'<sup>1</sup> and he was fully supported by his brother.<sup>2</sup> Grattan spoke in a very similar strain, and his speech certainly showed that there had been a considerable misunderstanding about the extent of the powers originally conceded to the Duke of Portland, or at least about the extent to which those powers had been limited and defined before the arrival of Lord Fitzwilliam in Ireland.

'The removal of certain great officers,' he said, was a 'matter of stipulation on the one side and engage-

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removal

<sup>1</sup> *Irish Parliamentary Debates*, April 21, 1795.

<sup>2</sup> 'Mr. George Ponsonby asserted peremptorily that he understood from members of the British Cabinet that *all* Lord F.'s measures were approved by them; that as to the Catholic Bill the best mode to be adopted in bringing it forward had been discussed, but that the principle of the Bill was admitted, and that it was certainly agreed to be passed. He declared upon his honour that he believed Lord F.'s conduct respecting the Catholic Bill had nothing to do with his recall from the government, but that it was made a popular pretext in order to engage the support of the Protestants, and he asserted that Lord F. was never urged by him or his friends to any measure which had not been previously agreed upon in the British Cabinet. He was temperate in his language, and expressed his wish never to discuss the subject again. Mr. William Ponsonby asserted that the Duke of Portland

told him that he had formed the union with Mr. Pitt on condition of having a power to name the L. L. and to reform abuses in the Irish Government, and he declared upon his honour as a gentleman that all Lord F.'s measures and arrangements were settled and agreed to by his Grace.' Pelham, in reply, said that the relations of a Lord Lieutenant and of his Secretary with the English Government were of the most confidential character, and that he would certainly not enter into this subject. He added, however, 'I could not pretend to contradict anything that might have been said in a private conversation between the D. of Portland and a person so nearly allied to him in blood and friendship as Mr. Ponsonby, but . . . I might say with some authority and certainty, with truth as far as I was concerned, that the D. of P. and his friends joined Mr. Pitt without any stipulation whatever.'—Pelham to J. King, April 23, 1795. (Record Office.)



ment on the other.' When the Duke of Portland first joined the Government of Pitt, he 'declared that he conceived the old system of governing the country so extremely bad that it not only injured Ireland but endangered the Empire. To reform that system was his principal motive for accepting office, and he would have come over to this country in person had he not found a substitute in Lord Fitzwilliam, whom he prevailed on to accept the government of Ireland, and to whose honest care he entrusted the reformation of those abuses which he had declared to be absolutely necessary. He had obtained, with regard to this country, extraordinary power; the information of that extraordinary power he communicates to his Irish friends; he consults the members of the Irish Opposition touching his arrangements of men and measures, and espouses as an essential arrangement those principal removals which are supposed to have occasioned the recall of the deputy. An explanation and limitation of his power did indeed afterwards take place, but no such limitation or explanation as to defeat the stipulated measures or the stipulated removals, one only excepted<sup>1</sup> which never took place. The persons who had uniformly opposed the old system which was now to be reformed were naturally and necessarily called to the councils of the new Viceroy; a change of men became a necessary part of a change of measures; for it would have been egregiously absurd that the men who had created and continued the abuses which had endangered the Empire should remain still in that power which they had abused, while the persons who had opposed the abuses should be excluded from the councils of the individual who was to correct them.'

On the Catholic question—which Grattan seems to

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<sup>1</sup> That of Fitzgibbon.

have agreed with Fitzwilliam in thinking rather the pretext than the cause of the recall—Grattan's position was little more than an expansion of Fitzwilliam's own words. 'The idea of promoting a repeal of the penal laws against his Majesty's Catholic subjects had been suggested by that quarter of the Cabinet which was connected with Lord Fitzwilliam, and agreed to by the other. . . . My friends repeatedly declared they would never support any government that would resist that Bill, and it was agreed to by that quarter with perfect concurrence, and I was informed from persons in whom I could not but confide that the instruction was, if the Catholics insisted on carrying forward their Bill, the Government should give it a handsome support.' 'As to the Catholic question, nothing more natural than the instruction "do not bring forward this question lest it should produce a Protestant fever; but if the question is pressed forward by the Catholics, allay a Catholic fever, avoid, as in 1792, the greater disease."' 'Of this necessity, of this temper in the people and disposition to bring forward the Catholic question his Excellency was to be the judge. It had been hinted in some false and feeble publications that the question was brought forward by Lord Fitzwilliam's connection. Certainly not; the question could not be kept back. I appeal to the knowledge of every intelligent man in Ireland. The acceptance of office by the Duke of Portland brought on that question. It is my opinion it would have come on without that encouragement, but that encouragement decided the minds of the Catholics. They supposed with great reason that his Grace was their friend; they knew that his connections in Ireland were so. They supposed that his Grace would consult his friends, and they understood that they had great powers. This confidence therefore decided the

minds of the Catholics to bring on the question. With respect to the manner of bringing on the question they might not have at the time decided, but to bring it on they were firmly resolved. The British minister in 1792 gave hopes to the Catholics; the new colleagues in 1794 gave hopes, and both have now united in disappointing those hopes which they both had excited. . . . They send over a Viceroy professedly to unite and satisfy the people; he proceeds on the reform of certain abuses and gets a great supply of money and men, and then they recall him . . . with as little regard to the feelings of the country as to her interests; and they produce by this act, which they say is done for the preservation of the Empire, an unanimity against the Government after Lord Fitzwilliam produced an unanimity in its favour. . . . They excite a domestic fever, at the hazard of the general interest, for no object, or for an object too despicable or too criminal to be mentioned.’<sup>1</sup>

It seems to me evident that Grattan agreed with Fitzwilliam and Ponsonby in attributing the recall of Lord Fitzwilliam entirely to the question of patronage, but there are, I think, reasons which were not known to them establishing a probability that the Catholic question had a greater influence than they imagined. There is a strange contrast between the general approbation of the policy of admitting Catholics to Parliament which, according to Fitzwilliam’s explicit and uncontradicted statement, Portland expressed at the beginning of the administration, and the tone of absolute hostility to such a measure as in itself fatal to the establishments of Ireland which appears in his later despatches. The suspicion naturally arises that something

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<sup>1</sup> *Grattan’s Speeches*, iii. 175–185.

must have happened in the interval to affect his judgment, and we know that a good deal had actually occurred. We now know that when the King became aware that the admission of the Catholics into the Irish Parliament was in contemplation, he at once expressed his decided hostility to such a project. We know that Fitzgibbon had drawn up a statement to the effect that it was not within the competence of the King to assent to such a measure, as it would be a violation of his Coronation Oath and of the fundamental principles of the Constitution as established under the Act of Settlement. We know that Lord Westmorland, the bitterest enemy of Lord Fitzwilliam, had communicated to the King the views and letters of Fitzgibbon, and that, at least in his later years, those views were adopted by the King to their full extent. The knowledge of the King's sentiments which the ministers possessed makes their later conduct in holding out hopes of immediate emancipation to the Catholics, without taking any measure for securing the assent of the King, in my judgment peculiarly culpable, but at the time of the administration of Lord Fitzwilliam it may in some degree explain and perhaps excuse their conduct. It may have convinced them that though no serious difficulties were to be apprehended in Ireland, the difficulty in England might be very great.

There is also reason for believing that the project of a legislative union was not alien to their conduct. An examination of the confidential papers of the time shows that such a measure had been for some years in the contemplation of Pitt, and that Fitzgibbon, from the time when the Catholics were admitted to the franchise, in 1793, had been writing to England that by such a measure alone could the connection between England and Ireland be permanently maintained. The bearings of

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Fitzwilliam's  
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the Catholic question on the question of Union were clear and manifold. If the Catholics were admitted into the Irish Parliament, and especially if their admission was followed by a measure of parliamentary reform, the difficulty of inducing the Irish Parliament to surrender its separate existence would probably be much increased. It was possible to argue that the admission of Catholics into a separate Irish Parliament would be fatal to the Protestant Establishment in Ireland, while in a united Parliament, in which they would always be a small minority, they would be impotent and innocuous; and both the hope and the fear of Catholic Emancipation might easily be made a powerful inducement to Protestants and Catholics to consent to a union. The passage in the confidential despatch, published by Fitzwilliam, in which Portland urged that by deferring the Catholic question he would be 'the means of doing a greater service to the British Empire than it has been capable of receiving since the Revolution or, at least, since the Union,' was at once and generally interpreted in Ireland as pointing to such a measure. Fitzgibbon believed this interpretation to be correct, and when Pelham, in the succeeding administration, wished to disclaim it he was not allowed to do so.

The conduct of Grattan through the events that have been described needs no defence. He opposed strongly and eloquently the policy that produced the recall of Lord Fitzwilliam, but in the critical and dangerous period that immediately followed the announcement of that recall he appears to have been eminently a moderating influence. He persuaded Conolly to withdraw a hostile motion protesting against the prorogation of Parliament before grievances were redressed. He used all his influence to keep the Catholics from mixing themselves up with the French policy of the United

Irishmen, and he expressed his conviction that if they kept within the limits of the Constitution their cause must speedily triumph. When Lord Camden came over to succeed Fitzwilliam there was a party who desired to oppose the usual parliamentary address of congratulation; but Grattan declared that, though he could not concur with the address, he would not oppose it, and it accordingly passed unanimously. Camden and Pelham, his Chief Secretary, in their confidential letters to England acknowledged fully the moderation, temper and courtesy with which he spoke, and they believed that both he and Forbes were well disposed to the Lord Lieutenant. The truth seems to be that Grattan at first believed that the Catholic policy of Fitzwilliam was not the real cause of the change of administration, and that his successor would soon carry it out as the only means of pacifying the country, and if this were done he was very indifferent to questions of persons and patronage.

There was, at least, one important member of the Whig party in the English Cabinet who fully appreciated his conduct, and who hoped that the new administration would diverge very little from the spirit of its predecessors. 'It is my earnest hope,' wrote Windham to Pelham, 'that you will still be able to preserve a good intelligence with Grattan, and to satisfy him that both in respect to men and measures, except in the single point of an immediate and unlimited concession to the Catholics, Lord Camden's Government will be such that he will not feel it necessary to be in opposition to. . . . It is a debt due in justice to Grattan not to suffer the consequences of his fairness and real regard for the public welfare to operate to his disadvantage, nor pass in the eyes of the world as a want of power rather than as a want of will to do mischief. I

say this because in the minds of some of our friends on this side of the water justice is not done to him in that respect, nor sufficient credit given him—at least, as I have sometimes thought—for that forbearance which he manifested during all the latter period of Lord Westmorland's Administration. Few public men have to my mind given such an honourable proof of their willingness to sacrifice even their immediate political consequence—the last sacrifice that such men are in general willing to make—to the general interests of the country. . . . For my own part, I cannot bear the thought of being on any other terms with him than those of confidence and co-operation in the great cause to which he has shown himself so truly attached. . . . I should be sorry to have him suppose that anything that has passed or anything that I am persuaded can pass can . . . make me otherwise than ambitious of his friendship and good opinion.'

The spirit, however, of this letter was not that which inspired the Government of Ireland. It was determined that Catholic Emancipation should be resisted to the utmost, and in order that this should be done it was necessary that an anti-Catholic movement should be directly stimulated by men who were ministers of the Crown. Camden was instructed by Portland to do all in his power to convince the most important persons in Ireland that the contemplated concessions must be either subversive of the Protestant Establishment or wholly insignificant, and at the same time to rally the Protestant interest against them. He was himself to hold a firm and decided language of hostility to them, but to tell the Protestants that Government can only effectually resist (as it wishes to do) the Catholics by their concurrence, and that if the Protestants will only support them, the Government 'will be ready to make

any exertion they can desire to prevent the admission of Catholics to seats in the Legislature.’<sup>1</sup>

In order to carry out this policy, leading members and supporters of the Government went down to the grand juries to induce those bodies to pass resolutions against Catholic Emancipation, and at the same time the overwhelming parliamentary influence of the Government was strained to the utmost. After a memorable and instructive debate, in which the independent members of the House urged in the most solemn accents the danger and the madness of the policy that was being pursued, the Bill for Catholic Emancipation was thrown out by 155 votes to 84. The members of the Government no longer placed their resistance on any grounds of temporary expediency, but on the highest and most permanent grounds of principle, declaring it to be inconsistent with the most fundamental laws of the State, and holding out no expectation of future concession. This was the language of the Chief Secretary, who asserted that ‘the exclusion of Catholics from Parliament and the State is necessary for the Crown and the Connection,’<sup>2</sup> while the Solicitor-General not only declared Catholic Emancipation to be contrary to the Coronation Oath, by which the King held his throne, and to the Bill of Rights, but even declared that the Crown and Parliament, together being but trustees for the preservation of the Constitution, had no right to carry it. In order to show beyond all doubt what were the sentiments of the Cabinet, Fitzgibbon was now made Earl of Clare. His inexorable hostility to all Catholic concessions made this promotion in the highest degree significant, and it was pre-eminently on

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<sup>1</sup> Secret instructions to Lord Camden, March 26, 1795.

<sup>2</sup> See *Grattan's Speeches*, iii. 243.



this ground that it was recommended by Camden. Its object, he said, was to encourage the Protestants in their resistance to Catholic claims. They found it difficult to believe that the Government were in earnest. This would do much to convince them.

Looking back on this period with the knowledge of the event, no policy can be conceived more fatuous or more disastrous, and no one who impartially studies Irish history can, I believe, doubt that it contributed largely to the two most permanent evils of Irish life—to Catholic disloyalty and to religious animosity. It is quite true that Camden was instructed to do what he could within the lines that were marked out for him to persuade the Catholics of the liberal and conciliatory disposition of the Government. The establishment of a seminary for the education of the priests; a provision for the Catholic parochial clergy, and some measures for the education of the lower class of Catholics were suggested. Nothing was done under the two last categories, but the first measure, which was warmly supported by Grattan, was realised by the establishment of the College of Maynooth. It was utterly impotent to arrest the religious war, which was spreading more and more through Ireland, and the growing disloyalty that was sweeping great bodies more and more to rebellion.

Camden was not wholly insensible to the danger, and he does not seem to have widely differed from Lord Fitzwilliam in thinking that in the event of invasion the refusal of all concession to the Catholics might be of the most serious consequence. 'The quiet of the country,' he wrote, 'depends upon the exertions of the friends of the established Government backed by a strong military force.' 'I confess I am more alarmed at the general want of attachment to Government than at any consequences that may arise from any violent or

bigoted attachment to religious opinions.' He thinks, however, that 'all will be quiet if there is no invasion, and if troops are immediately sent.' Fitzgibbon told him that a firm policy would soon re-establish tranquillity, and he believed that the leading Catholic gentry would do nothing to embarrass him. His Chief Secretary thought so too, and after all that had happened it is curiously significant that it was the evident impression of Pelham that it might still be a desirable thing to follow the example of Fitzwilliam and remove Beresford. There is some chance, he wrote, 'that the cry will be more in favour of Lord F., and against the Beresfords than in favour of the Roman Catholics. If it should take that turn and that any sacrifices are necessary (which you know I will never admit *a priori* in politics) Pitt must submit to Beresford's removal. I am sorry to say, but I must on such a critical occasion, that Pitt seems more animated about men upon this occasion than he ought to be. I am by no means satisfied with his conduct about Beresford when I met him at his house with Lord Camden. I very much wished to have seen Lord Grenville upon that subject before I left London. . . . I am so confident of being right on the Catholic question that I feel confident also of success, but I fear that we shall be weak upon questions of administration and conduct, in argument at least, and I cannot boldly defend a job even in Ireland.'<sup>1</sup>

The days of the Irish Parliament were now but few and evil. Three or four times Grattan brought forward the Catholic and the reform questions, but the Government continually refused to yield, and the revolutionary tide surged higher and higher. His speeches at this

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<sup>1</sup> Pelham to Portland, March 22, 1795.

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time, in addition to their extraordinary intrinsic merit, have a special importance from the light they throw on the condition of Ireland in the critical period that preceded the great rebellion. They show in every page his extreme alarm at the dangers of the situation and his belief that a speedy peace and a large measure of parliamentary reform could alone save Ireland from a catastrophe. He believed that the great bulk of the people were fast passing into bitter disaffection, and that a French invasion would be inevitably followed by a most sanguinary rebellion. He dilated on the defencelessness of Ireland; on the neglect which allowed a French fleet carrying a French army to enter unmolested into Bantry Bay; on the shameful supineness shown by the Government in the face of the outrages of the Peep of Day or Orange Boys in Ulster; on the innumerable acts of illegal and exasperating violence committed in the north under General Lake's proclamation; on the growing financial dangers and on the injudiciousness of the new taxes on tea, sugar, and salt which pressed with special weight upon the poor. An enrolment of a yeoman force exclusively devoted to the defence of Ireland, an absentee tax, and a large measure of parliamentary reform and Catholic Emancipation seemed to him the best remedies; but the Irish Parliament was now almost completely in the hands of the Government, and Grattan seldom counted more than thirty or forty supporters. At last, in the May of 1797, in company with his leading supporters, he formally seceded from Parliament, and when the House was dissolved in the ensuing August he refused to stand, and retired into private life.

He wrote at the same time a 'letter to the citizens of Dublin' which is one of his most powerful but also one of his most questionable performances. It is a

fierce and unsparing condemnation of the whole policy of the Government since the recall of Lord Fitzwilliam. The greater part of it is incontestably true, but as Grattan afterwards very candidly acknowledged 'it was not wise,' 'it tended to enflame,' it was written under the impulse of extreme exasperation. He had found it wholly impossible to cope with the Government during that period of panic. He could not sympathise with the party who were appealing to arms, nor yet with those whose policy was in his opinion driving them to disloyalty. He was guided, too, in a great measure, by the example of Fox, who, when he found his party hopelessly reduced, had retired from the debates; but, unlike Fox, he resigned his seat when he abstained from parliamentary business.

If it were not for the wretched condition of the country, it would have cost him comparatively little to retire from active politics; for he possessed all the resources of happiness that are furnished by a highly cultivated intellect, by the most amiable of dispositions, and the attachment of innumerable friends. All accounts concur in representing him in private life as the simplest and most winning of mortals. The transparent purity of his life and character, a most fascinating mixture of vehemence and benevolence, a certain guilelessness of appearance, and a certain unconscious oddity, both of diction and gesture, gave a peculiar charm and pungency to his conversation. Like his speeches, it was tessellated with epigram and antithesis, full of strokes of a delicate, original, and laconic humour, of curiously minute and vivid delineations of character, of striking anecdotes, admirably though quaintly told. He had seen and observed much, and he possessed a rare insight into character, and a great originality both of thought and of expression. Plunket said of his con-

versation, that 'he gave results rather than processes of reasoning. Every sentence was a treasure.'

In early life he had lived much alone, but he came to dread the melancholy of solitude, though he always hated large and mixed assemblies. He was happy in his domestic life; happiest of all when he could gather a few congenial spirits round a small dinner table, or wander with them through the long summer day listening to the hum of the bees among the lime trees, or recalling the figures and the images of the old classical world, or describing with a fine and delicate criticism the eloquence and the characters of his great contemporaries. He had a beautiful old-world courtesy to both young and old, and it was noticed that, like Louis XIV., he never failed to return the bow of a child. Few men of great powers who spent a long life in the turmoil of public affairs have ever been so free from the element of personal ambition. Office he refused to take, and his private fortune was more than sufficient for his very moderate wants.<sup>1</sup> 'Wealth,' he once said, 'makes a man sad. He lives for others who don't care for him. He becomes a steward.' He disliked both the show and the cares of a great country house, but his own home amid the Wicklow Hills, and by the Dargle stream, though neither stately nor spacious according to English measurements, lay in the heart of one of the loveliest valleys in Ireland. He delighted in music and poetry, and his love of nature amounted to a passion, and continued unabated during every portion of his life. In one of Horner's letters there is a charming description of the enthusiasm with which,

<sup>1</sup> Moore states, on the authority of Henry Bushe, 'that Grattan died possessed of an income of 2,000*l.* a year, owing

50,000*l.*, having borrowed to purchase.'—Moore's *Diary*, iii. 220.

when an old man, he left London to visit a county which was famous for its nightingales, in order that he might enjoy the luxury of their song. There was about him so much greatness and so much goodness, that he rarely failed to win the love and the veneration of those who came in contact with him, but also so much oddity that he usually provoked a smile. With much mild dignity of manner and great energy of intellect, he combined an almost childlike simplicity and freshness of character. No schoolboy enjoyed with a keener zest a day's holiday in the country; and Curran, who delighted in mimicking his singularities, described him conducting a controversy about the respective merits of two pumps, with an intensity of earnestness and a measured gravity worthy of a great political contest.

It is a fine saying of Coleridge that in men of genius the matured judgment of the man is combined with the delicacy of feeling and the susceptibility of impressions of the child, and it needs but little acquaintance with biography to perceive that these last elements almost invariably enter into the composition of really great men. It is scarcely less true of the temple of genius than of the temple of Christianity, that he who would enter in must become as a little child.

It does not fall within the province of the present work to paint the rebellion of 1798. Public opinion had but little scope during a period of military law and of mob violence, and the historians of the two countries may well let the curtain fall over a scene that was equally disgraceful to both. The man who at that time occupied the first position in the public mind was, beyond all question, Curran. Seldom has Ireland produced a patriot of more brilliant and varied talents; and although there were grave defects in his private character, his public life was singularly unblemished,

Curran

and few of his contemporaries inspired a larger measure of affection. Rising from the humblest position, he early attracted public attention as a poet of no mean promise—a wit of almost the highest order—and an orator who might compare with the greatest of his countrymen. If his speeches, like those of most lawyers, are somewhat lax and inaccurate in their style; if they are not remarkable either for depth of thought or for force of reasoning, they are characterised at least by a musical flow that delights even in an imperfect and uncorrected report, and by powers of pathos, imagination, and humour that scarcely met in an equal degree in any of his contemporaries. He was not a great lawyer, but he was one of the greatest of advocates, admirably fitted to sway juries, and a consummate master of cross-examination. A member of a profession where all promotion depended on the Government, and was then given from political motives, he was never guilty of abandoning a principle or swerving from a public duty. At the very beginning of his career he signalised himself by volunteering to defend an old priest who had been maltreated by a Protestant nobleman, and whose cause no other member of the Bar was willing to adopt. Lord Clare drove him from the Court of Chancery by continual evidences of dislike. Lord Carleton hinted to him that he might lose his silk gown for his defence of the United Irishman Neilson. During one of his speeches he is said to have been interrupted by the clash of the arms of an angry soldiery, and more than once he had to dread those political duels by which dulness so often revenged itself upon genius. In his famous speech for Hamilton Rowan he could adopt almost without alteration the exordium of Cicero's defence of Milo, but, unlike Cicero, the intimidating circumstances he described only served to stimulate his

eloquence. And yet this man, before whose sarcasm and invective perjured witnesses so often trembled; this man, on whose burning eloquence crowded and sometimes hostile courts hung breathless with admiration till the shadows of evening had long closed in, was in private life the most affable, the most gentle, the most unassuming of friends. The briefless barrister, the young man making his first essay of ambition, the bashful, the needy, the disappointed, found in him the easiest of companions, and acknowledged with delight that his social qualities were as fascinating as his eloquence.

Like his contemporary Erskine, he never obtained in Parliament a position corresponding to that which he held at the Bar; but his parliamentary career, if not very brilliant, was at least eminently consistent and disinterested. He made his maiden speech in favour of Flood's Reform Bill; he took part in almost every subsequent effort to purify the Parliament, to emancipate the Catholics, to reduce the pensions, to ameliorate the criminal code, and to prevent the introduction of military law, and he laboured with especial earnestness, though without success, to assimilate the law of treason in Ireland to that of England, by which two witnesses were necessary for a capital conviction. In all the great trials of '98 he was the counsel for the prisoners. His finest effort is his defence of Hamilton Rowan, which has been styled by the first of our oratorical critics<sup>1</sup> the most eloquent speech ever delivered at the Bar, though it is said to owe a great deal of its pre-eminence to the fact that it was better reported than his other speeches. It was on that occasion that he delivered his well-known justification of the princi-

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<sup>1</sup> Lord Brougham in his defence of Hunt.



ple of 'universal emancipation,' which had been asserted by the United Irishmen, and denounced by the Crown officers as treasonable. 'I speak in the spirit of the British law, which makes liberty commensurate with and inseparable from the British soil; which proclaims even to the stranger and the sojourner, the moment he sets his foot on British earth, that the ground on which he treads is holy and consecrated by the genius of universal emancipation. No matter in what language his doom may have been pronounced; no matter what complexion, incompatible with freedom, an African or an Indian sun may have burnt upon him; no matter in what disastrous battle his liberty may have been cloven down; no matter with what solemnities he may have been devoted upon the altar of slavery; the first moment he touches the sacred soil of Britain the altar and the god sink together in the dust; his soul walks abroad in its own majesty; his body swells beyond the measure of his chains that burst from around him, and he stands redeemed, regenerated, and disenthralled by the irresistible genius of universal emancipation.'

The rebellion of '98 was at last suppressed, and the ministers determined to avail themselves of the opportunity to annihilate the Irish Parliament. The notion of a Union had been more than once propounded in both countries. Cromwell had summoned Irish members to the Parliament in Westminster. Many eminent writers had advocated a Union, among others, Sir W. Petty and Adam Smith; and about the time of the Union with Scotland both Irish Houses of Parliament, as we have already seen, had indicated their strong wish that a similar measure might be carried for Ireland. A Legislative Union accompanied by free trade, and thus abolishing the great mass of commercial restrictions under which Ireland then suffered, would have been

undoubtedly accepted at that time by the Irish Protestants with enthusiasm, and would probably have been viewed at least with indifference by the Irish Catholics. The reply of the Lord Lieutenant, however, to the parliamentary address was exceedingly discouraging; and from this time the question seems to have slept till 1759, when a report was current that such a measure was contemplated; and it was now so unpopular that the Dublin mob seized a number of the members and made them swear that they would vote against it.

The unpopularity of all notion of a Legislative Union in Ireland for a long time steadily increased. The country had grown more powerful and more prosperous. The worst of the penal laws had been abolished or had become completely obsolete, and the relations between the Protestants and Catholics were far more harmonious. Ireland had obtained under Lord North a measure of free trade which gave great scope to her native industries, and though free trade with England was not yet conceded, the strong commercial motive which had made the idea of a Union popular in the early years of the century was much weakened. At the same time, under the influence of Flood, Grattan, the volunteers, and the American Revolution, a strong spirit of nationality had arisen. The emancipation of the Irish Parliament by the Constitution of 1782 at once recognised and stimulated it, and from this time for many years it was acknowledged by the best judges in Ireland that even the suggestion on the part of the Government of an attempt to carry a Legislative Union would be most dangerous. Corrupt and easily influenced as the Irish Parliament was, it would have been totally impossible to induce it to vote such a measure.

On the other hand, the very circumstances that made the Union so unpopular in Ireland made it in the

eyes of the English ministers especially desirable. It was the conviction of a succession of viceroys and of some of the most considerable English statesmen that the link of connection binding the two countries together under the Constitution of 1782 was so slender that it could not resist any serious strain of conflicting interests or sentiments. The geographical situation of Ireland; the strange system under which the Irish Executive fluctuated with the changes of English parties; and the complete absence of any power capable of superintending and unifying the common commercial interests of the Empire made the dangers of dissension and disruption very great. It is true that the Irish Parliament consisted as yet of men who were attached to the Empire by the strongest ties, both of feeling and interest, and who had shown themselves during the great French wars fervently and almost unanimously loyal, and it was also true that the English Government exercised a very real control over its proceedings. The House of Lords was completely under its influence. Peerages had long been granted almost exclusively with a view to ensure ministerial influence, and the bishops, who were absurdly numerous in proportion to their flocks, might with the rarest exceptions be always counted on. The Irish House of Commons contained a considerable body of men who in ability, in independence, in high character and in knowledge of the country were eminently fitted to represent the best elements in Irish life. It is probable, indeed, that in no subsequent period have the property and the intelligence of the Irish gentry been so adequately represented, or so large a portion of the best Irish talent enlisted in the public service. But it was impossible that a House of Commons could be really independent in which more than two-thirds of the members sat for nomination

boroughs, the great majority of them belonging to men who were in close connection with the Government, and it was the universally recognised rule that the member of a nomination borough, unless he had bought his seat, was bound on all great occasions to vote in accordance with the wishes of his patron or else to resign.

It was, however, quite clear that the two great questions of parliamentary reform and Catholic Emancipation could not be for ever adjourned, and if the nomination boroughs were swept away and a considerable Catholic element introduced into the House of Commons, it was feared that the centrifugal tendency would operate with greatly increased force. English ministers very generally convinced themselves that unless the Constitution of 1782 was materially modified the ultimate alternative must be a Legislative Union or a separation.

Pitt, as we have seen, had made a serious effort in 1785 to meet the difficulty by proposals which would have bound Ireland by much closer commercial ties with England and the Empire. If his original scheme had been carried into effect the tie of the connection would have been greatly strengthened, and there is much reason to believe that he would have then gladly favoured a moderate parliamentary reform and at least acquiesced in large concessions to the Catholics. When, however, his propositions were altered in England and finally defeated in Ireland, he appears to have definitely abandoned all notion of seriously reforming the Irish Parliament, and to have supported those who believed that it must be the main object of the Government to maintain, and even to increase, the influence of the Executive over its composition. The dissension between the two Parliaments on the Regency question strengthened this determination, and the enormous

creation of peerages, pensions and places that followed greatly aggravated the situation. A place Bill which obliged members who accepted places or pensions to vacate their seats had a liberal aspect, but in truth it served the same policy, for it gave the Government the power of largely changing the composition of the House of Commons without the necessity of a dissolution.

The possibility of a Union of Parliaments had for a long time been frequently noticed in both countries in newspapers and pamphlets. Even before the emancipation of the Irish Parliament, and especially at the time of the American War, the idea had been much discussed, and Arthur Young speaks of its great unpopularity in Ireland. In the debate on the amended commercial relations, it was frequently mentioned in the Parliaments of both countries. In England most members who touched on the subject viewed it favourably. In Ireland there was not a voice in its favour. Grattan in emphatic language warned the Parliament that such a scheme was probably in contemplation, and he denounced it with implacable hostility. In 1786 Charlemont, in a letter to Flood, expressed truly the prevailing feeling. 'The English papers,' he wrote, 'have lately been infested with the idea of a Union, but except for them I know nothing of it; neither can I suppose it possible that such a notion can have entered into the heads of our present administrators. When we had no Constitution the idea was scarcely admissible. What, then, must it be now?' Opinions even in England were much divided about it. Dean Tucker, one of the best political writers of his time, wrote a pamphlet in favour of it. Wilberforce on one occasion observed that it would be a good measure, but impracticable, for the people would never consent. Burke was decidedly unfavourable, believing it would

be injurious to both countries. 'Do not unite with us,' Dr. Johnson once said to an Irish gentleman; 'we would unite with you only to rob you.'

The introduction of the Catholic democracy into the Constitution by the Relief Bill of 1793 does not appear to have materially affected the Irish hostility to a Union. There may have been a few men who shared the views of Fitzgibbon on the subject, but they were still a small and scattered minority, and no recognised party in Ireland would as yet even tolerate the idea.

But the dangers of the ensuing years shook many. The great French war was raging, and there was a party in Ireland, though not in the Irish Parliament, who were in warm sympathy with France. There were constant fears of invasion. A French fleet actually reached Bantry Bay, and a French landing was only prevented by the accident of the weather. Sedition was spreading rapidly, and after the recall of Lord Fitzwilliam religious animosities sprang forth into a new vigor. Over a great part of the island anarchy prevailed, and multiplying crimes and dangers, and anticipations of evil shook the confidence of many in the stability of the Constitution.

It was, however, the United Irishmen and the rebellion of 1798 that killed the Irish Parliament. The rebellion was directed against that Parliament. It was suppressed by that Parliament, and its most important result was to make the destruction of that Parliament possible. The struggle in Wexford assumed the character of a religious war, and was on both sides disgraced by horrible cruelties. The members of the two creeds who had been for many years approximating were now once more parted by a great gulf, and the formation of the Orange Society and the great part which Orangemen had borne in putting down the rebellion gave

Protestant ascendancy a peculiarly irritating and insulting character. The passions aroused on both sides by the rebellion were such as to make all harmonious government in Ireland far more difficult than in the past. The Protestants passed into that condition of terrified ferocity to which ruling races are always liable when they find themselves a small minority in the midst of a fierce rebellion. 'The minds of the people,' wrote Lord Cornwallis, after the suppression of the revolt, 'are now in such a state that nothing but blood will satisfy them. 'Even at my table, where you will suppose I do all I can to prevent it, the conversation always turns on hanging, shooting, burning, and so forth; and if a priest has been put to death the greatest joy is expressed by the whole company.' The Catholics were equally sanguinary. A prominent rebel, who was executed on Vinegar Hill, and whose confession is preserved in the 'Castlereagh Correspondence,' gives a graphic account of their proceedings: 'Every man that was a Protestant was called an Orangeman; and every one was to be killed, from the poorest man in the country. Before the rebellion I never heard there was any hatred between Catholics and Protestants; they always lived peaceably together. I always found the Protestants better masters and more indulgent landlords than my own religion. During the rebellion I never saw anyone interfere to prevent murder but one Byrne, who saved a man.'

In this state of feeling the prospect of the Catholic question being peacefully solved in a separate Irish Parliament greatly receded, and when the Government announced to the Catholics their inexorable determination to resist to the last Catholic Emancipation in such a Parliament, while at the same time they clearly intimated to them that if a Union were carried they in-

tended to give the Catholics political equality, to admit them to the Imperial Parliament, to commute the tithes, and to pay the priests, it is not surprising that they found some real support for the Union in the Catholic ranks. To humiliate their conquerors was not without its charm, and it was believed that some of the most Catholic parts of Ireland were those that would especially gain by the Union.

In democratic Ulster, a few months before, such a measure would have encountered the fiercest resistance, but here, too, powerful influences were at work. The Presbyterians of the north had long resented more bitterly than any other class the corruption and anomalies of the Irish representation, and the United Irish movement, which sprang chiefly in Ulster, was primarily a revolt against the existing constitution of the Parliament. It had become plain that the prospect of reforming it had in the last months greatly diminished, and if the Union curtailed the representation of Ireland, it might at least be expected to sweep away the aristocratic government and the nomination boroughs. The scheme of the United Irishmen had failed, and, what was more important, their ideal had disappeared. Their dream had been a close alliance between Protestants and Catholics in order to obtain by their joint efforts a purely democratic government. Some would have accepted a democratic Parliament under the British flag. Another, and a growing, section looked forward to a separate republic. But the massacres of Scullabogue, of Vinegar Hill, and of Wexford Bridge checked their zeal. The Protestant republicans started back with horror at the spectacle of the religious war in Leinster, and with very inconsiderable exceptions they refused to take part in a struggle in which Father Murphy and Father Roche were the leaders. The



alliance was definitely broken, and many who a few months before had ardently aspired to a separate Ireland, were now convinced that such an Ireland with an overwhelming Catholic population would be a very different thing from what they had imagined.

It was urged that under such circumstances Ulster would readily accept the Union as a compromise. A larger Regium Donum for the Presbyterian ministers was agreed to for the purpose of securing the allegiance of a very influential class; the prospect of a commutation of tithes was held out as certain to follow the Union and it would at least mitigate one of the chief grievances of the Presbyterians, and it was at the same time represented to them that the linen trade, which was the great manufacture of Ulster, was certain to derive an increased security, and likely to obtain an increased extension from the Union. There is no reason for believing that Ulster and the Presbyterians of Ulster were on the whole in favour of it, but it is certain that, under the influences I have described, it found some honest support in the north, and that among those who did not favour it there was an amount of apathy and indifference that in the old days of the volunteers would have appeared incredible.

It was among the Protestants of the Established Church that the Union was certain to encounter the strongest opposition. They formed the governing class of Ireland, and the vast majority were undoubtedly hostile. The attitude of the representatives of the counties and of the large towns who represented their true and uninfluenced sentiments was decisive, and it is remarkable that on this great question there was a perfect agreement between the more liberal Protestants who followed the banner of Grattan and Ponsonby, and the Orangemen who represented the fiercest and most

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intolerant form of Protestant ascendancy. Next to the country gentry, the truest test of the genuine Protestant opinion was to be found in the Bar. The legal profession in Ireland was at this time exceedingly prosperous. Incomes at the Bar were probably larger than at any subsequent period, and the profession included an unusually large number of men of brilliant intellect and eminently independent characters. The overwhelming majority of these, including nearly all the foremost men, were to the last steady opponents of the Union.

It is indeed true that the Union was in some important respects very hostile to their professional interests. It transferred the Supreme Court of Appeals and in more direct ways much other legal business to London, and it made it impossible to pursue simultaneously a political and legal career. The Irish Parliament was full of lawyers, and when the law courts and the Parliament were in close proximity able men took a foremost place in both. The removal of the Parliament to a city more than 300 miles from the Irish law courts made this impossible, and it was only after steam had connected the two capitals that it again became possible in a small and imperfect degree to combine an Irish legal career with parliamentary life. But, on the other hand, the Irish Chancellor was the most ardent supporter of the Union, and the whole patronage of the Government was steadily, profusely, and exclusively employed in its favour. One of the great complaints that was made in the succeeding generation was the number of inferior and incompetent men who filled legal posts on account of their support of the Union. At the inception of the measure a meeting of the Irish Bar, which seems to have been attended by all its more active and eminent members, had discussed the measure

with great thoroughness and ability, and had condemned it by 166 to 32.

It was calculated, however, that if the Protestants of the Established Church were unsupported either by Presbyterian or Catholic opinion, their resistance might be overborne, and also that the events of the preceding months must have done something to shake their attachment to the separate Constitution of Ireland. The horrible scenes of massacre and panic that had taken place during the rebellion; the fierce religious divisions that had been aroused, the proved existence in Ireland of a party who had adopted with enthusiasm the subversive and predatory principles of the French Revolution, and who were prepared to welcome a foreign invasion, were all well fitted to alarm the owners of property. One of the reasons why the Union proposal was so hastily pressed was because the Government desired to avail itself of the time when the panic created by the rebellion had not yet gone down, and when military government was still in force.

Nothing, however, could be done if the private interests of those who returned the great majority of the Irish members were contrary to the Union, and accordingly the system was adopted of treating the nomination boroughs as private property and compensating the patrons at the rate of 7,500*l.* for each seat. Eighty boroughs returning 160 members were thus purchased for a sum of 1,260,000*l.*, which was added to the National Debt of Ireland. There were some close boroughs which were to be allowed to send members to the Imperial Parliament, and as in such cases their value would be rather enhanced than diminished, no compensation was required.

This part of the Union scheme has been much denounced. It is true that at the time of the Reform

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Bill of 1832 the recognition of nomination boroughs as private property was repudiated by all parties in England, and it was a natural complaint of Irish politicians that the finances of Ireland should have been burdened by the vast sum which had been expended in buying out her Parliament without the consent and contrary to the wishes of the overwhelming majority of the open constituencies. The justification, however, of the compensation to the borough-owners is simple necessity. Except by a *coup d'état*, neither a real reform of the Irish Parliament nor a Union could have been carried without it. Pitt in his English Reform Bill of 1785 had proposed to recognise the principle in England, and even the United Irishmen, when proposing a scheme of most democratic reform, had acknowledged the necessity of compensating the borough-owners. The compensation was given irrespective of their politics, and about one-third part of it went to opponents of the Union.

Another method which was adopted for the purpose of winning the support of the members of the Established Church in Ireland was the introduction into the Union scheme of a clause which was believed to be a permanent and unalterable guarantee for the perpetual maintenance of that Church. The abolition of tithes and the destruction of the Established Church were among the most powerful agencies by which the French revolutionists and their disciples in all countries sought to win popular support, and long before the French Revolution the danger to the Church had always been put in the first place by the adversaries of concessions to the Catholics. Both Flood and Charlemont had objected to Catholic Emancipation on the ground that it would lead to the disestablishment and disendowment of the Established Church, and the advocates of Catho-

lic Emancipation had always rejected the prophecy with indignation. By the Union it was maintained that the Church would be placed in absolute security, and this security was one of the special grounds upon which the Protestants were urged to support it. The Church being placed under the protection of a legislature which was likely at all times to remain mainly Protestant, it was imagined that no serious danger could menace it.

The stress laid upon these considerations by the Government advocates of the Union was very great. 'With the Union,' wrote the Secretary Cooke, 'Ireland would be in a natural situation; for, all the Protestants of the Empire being united, she would have the proportion of fourteen to three in favour of her Establishment, whereas at present there is a proportion of three to one against it.' 'So long as the separation shall continue,' said Castlereagh, 'the Church of Ireland will ever be liable to be impeached upon local grounds. Nor will it be able to maintain itself effectually against the argument of physical force. But when once completely incorporated with the Church of England, it will be placed upon such a strong and natural foundation as to be above all apprehensions and alarms.'

But in addition to the guarantee derived from the essentially Protestant character of the Imperial Parliament, it was urged that the perpetual maintenance of the Established Church might be made a matter of distinct treaty obligation; placing, as Irish Churchmen fondly believed, its destruction beyond the competence even of the Imperial Parliament; making its maintenance an essential and fundamental portion of the compact under which the Irish Protestant Parliament resigned into the hands of the Imperial Parliament the legislative power of Ireland. The 5th Article of the Act of Union appears to have been drawn up through

the influence of Archbishop Agar and Bishop O'Beirne. It laid down 'that the Church of England and Ireland, as now by law established, be united into one Protestant Episcopal Church, to be called the United Church of England and Ireland; that the doctrine, worship, discipline and government of the said United Church shall be and shall remain in full force for ever, as the same are now by law established for the Church of England; and that the continuance and preservation of the said United Church as the Established Church of England and Ireland shall be deemed and taken to be an essential and fundamental part of the Union; and that in like manner the doctrine, worship, discipline and government of the Church of Scotland shall remain and be preserved as the same are now established by law and by the Acts for the Union of the two kingdoms of England and Scotland.'

There can be no doubt that this article had a considerable effect in securing the support of the Protestant episcopacy, and although there is no evidence that the Protestant clergy in general took any active part in favour of the Union, this clause in it cannot have been unacceptable to them. For more than a generation it was regarded by English politicians as of binding force. In the Bill for Catholic Emancipation which was brought forward by Grattan in 1813, the permanent and inviolable Establishment of the Protestant Episcopal Church of England and Ireland was asserted in the preamble to be an essential part of our free Constitution, and the abolition of religious disqualifications was recommended, as tending by destroying religious animosities to promote its interests. When Plunket devoted his splendid gifts to pleading the cause of Catholic Emancipation in the Imperial Parliament, he at the same time declared that to uproot the Protestant

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Establishment in Ireland would be to shake the foundations of the Empire, and that the two countries must be separated before the Establishment could be abandoned.<sup>1</sup> When the Catholics were at last admitted into Parliament, it was on the condition of taking an oath binding them to use no privilege the Act gave them 'to disturb or weaken the Protestant religion or Protestant government of the United Kingdom,' and Sir Robert Peel has left an emphatic testimony of the intentions of the authors of this oath to treat Catholic Emancipation as a compact by which the Catholics obtained seats in Parliament on the condition of abdicating for ever all intention of impairing the Protestant character of the Establishment.<sup>2</sup> The King's Coronation Oath also bound him to maintain and preserve inviolably the Settlement of the United Church of England and Ireland as by law established, and the full legal rights and privileges of its bishops and clergy, and many who were not fanatics contended that the plain and natural meaning of this oath was that the King should exercise the power the Constitution had

<sup>1</sup> *Plunket's Life*, ii. 297. See, too, his most emphatic statements in his great speech on Catholic relief in 1821, *ibid.* pp. 20-67.

<sup>2</sup> 'In 1829 the civil disabilities of the Roman Catholics were removed by the legislature, and the measure by which that object was effected partook also of the nature of a compact as distinguished from an ordinary law. . . . By that Act the Protestants of Ireland were led to believe that all intention to subvert the present Church Establishment, as settled by law within these realms,

was most solemnly disclaimed and utterly abandoned. They were assured, on the obligation of an oath, that no privilege which the Act confers would be exercised to disturb or weaken the Protestant religion or the Protestant Government within these realms. . . . They little thought that within five years from the passing of that Act, the powers which it conferred would be exercised to subvert the Church Establishment, so far as regards the property of the Church.' April 2, 1835.

given him of refusing his assent to any measure the direct and avowed object of which was to destroy that Settlement or abolish those privileges. The conviction that repeal would be followed by disestablishment was one of the reasons that arrayed the great majority of the Protestants in hostility to O'Connell, and the connection between the two measures was clearly recognised. When Lord John Russell in 1835 was endeavouring to apply a very small part of the Irish Church revenues to secular purposes, Gladstone, in a speech of consummate eloquence, denounced the policy of the Whig leader, and predicted the consequences that might flow from it. 'The noble lord invited them to invade the property of the Church in Ireland. He (Mr. Gladstone) considered that they had abundant reasons for maintaining that Church, and if it should be removed he believed that they would not be long able to resist the repeal of the Union.'<sup>1</sup>

I have elsewhere written in great detail the history of the Irish Union, of the methods by which it was carried and of the fluctuations of public opinion concerning it, and I cannot here repeat the story. That there were some honest and disinterested men among those who voted for it cannot reasonably be questioned. Conolly, who was one of the most conspicuous members of the Irish House of Commons, had long been in favour of such a measure. Lord Gosford, while supporting the Union, most honourably refused to accept an offer of promotion in the peerage lest his motives should be misconstrued, and there were no doubt cases in which those who obtained peerages and places as supporters of the measure were sincerely in its favour. It is probable, too, that some of those who opposed it,

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<sup>1</sup> Hansard, 3rd ser. xxvii. 512.



opposed it less on the ground of its abstract demerits than on account of the time and circumstances in which it was put forward. The father of Miss Edgeworth, who was a member of the Irish House of Commons and a man of great integrity and good sense, is an example of this class. 'I am an Unionist,' he wrote to his friend Erasmus Darwin, 'but I vote and speak against the Union now proposed to us. . . . It is intended to force this measure down the throats of the Irish though five-sixths of the nation are against it. Now, though I think such an Union as would identify the nations, so that Ireland should be as Yorkshire to Great Britain, would be an excellent thing; yet I also think that the good people of Ireland ought to be *persuaded* of this *truth*, and not be dragooned into submission. The minister avows that seventy-two boroughs are to be compensated—i.e. bought—by the people of Ireland with one million and a half of their own money; and he makes this legal by a small majority made up chiefly of these very borough members. When thirty-eight county members out of sixty-four are against the measure, and twenty-eight counties out of thirty-two have petitioned against it, this is such abominable corruption that it makes our parliamentary sanction worse than ridiculous.'

When, however, all deductions are made it is a patent and indisputable fact that the Union was carried through the Irish Parliament in opposition to the overwhelming majority of its unbribed members; of the representatives of the independent constituencies and of the vast preponderance of its best talent. It was carried by a majority largely composed of placemen and pensioners, and by an amount of corruption unsurpassed if not unequalled in the history of representative governments. Wholesale dismissals of all placemen

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who refused to support the measure or to induce their relatives to do so, the uniform and steady employment of all Government patronage in the Church, the army, the law and the revenue with the sole object of carrying it, the systematic bribing of borough-owners or important members by peerages or promotions in the peerage, or promotions in the Church, or promotions to the Bench—these were the means by which the opposition was broken down. In a single list Cornwallis enumerated sixteen persons who were to be raised to the peerage on account of their services in carrying the Union—all of them members of or connected with the House of Commons. In the course of his short Viceroyalty twenty-eight Irish peerages were created, six Irish peers obtained English peerages on account of Irish services, twenty Irish peers obtained a higher rank in the peerage.

With the great concentration of borough patronage in a few hands, such methods were irresistible. In a single instance a peer who had declared himself hostile to the Union was induced, after long bargaining, and in consideration of an English peerage and a promised marquissate, to transfer no less than eight seats in the House of Commons. The ministers gave a positive assurance that they were resolved at all hazards to carry the Union, and that no defeat in the House of Commons would induce them to desist from their resolution. They cannot, it is true, be accused of having paid no attention to opinions outside the House. They had, as we have seen, offered large inducements to the different classes of the community; they made great efforts to procure addresses in favour of the Union, and they expended much money in subsidising the press. But when the Opposition urged that a measure of such a momentous character ought to be brought before the

constituencies by a dissolution they were met by an indignant denial. It is a memorable fact, indicating the power of the Tory reaction which followed the French Revolution, that this doctrine was denounced by Pitt as palpable and flagrant Jacobinism. The Government not only showed no desire to consult the wishes of the people, but it even strenuously laboured to separate the representatives from their influence. 'It seems,' wrote the Duke of Portland to Lord Castlereagh in 1799, 'as if the cry of Dublin had carried away many gentlemen whose interests in all respects must be benefited by a Union; and I have seen with some surprise, as well as with real concern, a deference expressed for the opinion of constituents which I conceive to have been as unnecessary as it is certainly unconstitutional.'<sup>1</sup> 'The clamour out of doors,' wrote Lord Cornwallis in the same year, 'is chiefly to be apprehended as furnishing the members within with a plausible pretext for acting in conformity to their own private feelings.'<sup>2</sup>

A few sentences from one of the speeches of Grey in the British House of Commons broadly sum up the situation. 'Twenty-seven counties have petitioned against the measure. The petition from the county of Down is signed by upwards of 17,000 respectable independent men, and all the others are in a similar proportion. Dublin petitioned under the Great Seal of the city, and each of the Corporations in it followed the example. Drogheda petitioned against the Union, and almost every other town in the kingdom in like manner testified its disapprobation. Those in favour of the measure possessing great influence in the country obtained a few counter-petitions; yet though the petition

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<sup>1</sup> *Castlereagh Correspondence*, ii. 146.

<sup>2</sup> *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 31.

from Down was signed by 17,000, the counter-petition was signed by only 415. Though there were 107,000 who had signed petitions against the measure, the total number of those who declared themselves in favour of it did not exceed 3,000; and many of these, even, only prayed that the measure might be discussed. . . . In fact the nation is nearly unanimous, and this great majority is composed not of fanatics, bigots, and Jacobins, but of the most respectable in every class in the community. . . . There are three hundred members in all [in the Irish House of Commons], and one hundred and twenty of these strenuously opposed the measure, among whom were two-thirds of the county members, the representatives of the city of Dublin, and almost all the towns which it is proposed shall send members to the Imperial Parliament.'<sup>1</sup>

In the first session, however, in which the question of the Union was brought before the Irish Parliament the Government failed to carry it. In the House of Commons in which, in all normal times and on all ordinary questions the Government majorities were overwhelming, the clause in the Address approving of a Union was rejected by 111 to 106, and the illumination of Dublin attested the delight of the people. Castle-reagh especially noticed 'the warmth of the country gentlemen, who spoke in great numbers, and with much energy against the question,' and thirty-four voted against the Government, while only seventeen supported it. Speaker after speaker declared in the most emphatic terms that the feeling of the country, and especially of its loyal classes, was in determined opposition to the scheme, and they challenged the Government to

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<sup>1</sup> *Parliamentary History*, xxxv. 60. I have noticed in my History some small inaccuracies in this statement.

test their assertion by a dissolution. Ponsonby, however, and Lord Corry failed in their attempt to induce the House to pass a resolution pledging it in no future time to accept a Union, and several country gentlemen took the opportunity of declaring that it was on the Union question, and on this alone, that they were opposed to the Government. Dobbs, a lawyer of some talents and the purest patriotism, but whose influence was impaired by an extraordinary monomania on the subject of prophecy,<sup>1</sup> brought forward a series of measures for the purpose of tranquillising the country, comprising Reform, Catholic Emancipation, and the payment of the priests; but the previous question was carried, and an attempt of the Opposition to provide against any possible recurrence of the Regency difference in a separate Irish Parliament by a Bill providing that the person who was *ipso facto* Regent of England should be always with the same powers Regent in Ireland, was equally unsuccessful. The object of this Bill was to take away one of the principal arguments urged in favour of a Legislative Union, and the House showed itself very ready to accept it, but

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<sup>1</sup> He believed that Armagh is Armageddon. The Irish, it appears, of Armagh is Armaceaddon; *c* and *g* are interchangeable letters, and thus, by contraction, we should have Armageddon. Armaceaddon means the hill of the prophet, and some 'eminent Hebrew scholar' considered that Armageddon meant much the same. Dobbs also considered that the 'white linen' in the Apocalypse alluded to the linen trade in Ireland, the sea of glass to its insular position,

the harps borne by the angels to its national arms, and that the Giant's Causeway was the Stone of Daniel. He wrote two books, *A Short View of Prophecy*, and *A Universal History*, both in letters to his son. Unlike most persons who indulge in these eccentric opinions, he was as liberal as he was patriotic, and was selected by Grattan to carry the resolutions in favour of the repeal of the penal laws to the volunteers at Dungannon.

at the last stage Lord Castlereagh succeeded in postponing it.

The demand of the Opposition that the opinions of the country should be tested by a dissolution was absolutely refused. With the great preponderance of nominated members a dissolution could not have very materially altered the balance of power, but it would probably have produced a decisive manifestation of the opinion of the free constituencies. But without a dissolution the Place Act, obliging place-owners to vacate their seats, enabled the Government to change the composition of the House to such a degree as to secure an assured majority. Some members who would not vote for the Union accepted lucrative offices and vacated their seats, and the conversion of great borough-owners obliged their anti-Union representatives in the House of Commons, according to the received code, to accept nominal offices and retire from Parliament. All these seats were filled by members brought in for the express purpose of carrying the Union. Some of them were Englishmen wholly unconnected with Ireland. Some were generals of the Staff. In this way, in the words of Grey, 'a Bill framed for preserving the purity of Parliament was abused and no less than sixty-three seats were vacated.'

All these vacancies occurred or were created between the prorogation of Parliament in 1799 and the Union debates in 1800, and they gave the Government a considerable and disciplined majority in the last session of the Irish Parliament. The English Cabinet wished the Bill to be pressed on with the utmost rapidity, but Castlereagh deprecated undue haste. 'It must be considered,' he said, 'that we have a minority consisting of 120 members, well combined and united; that many of them are men of the first weight and talent in the

House; that thirty-seven of them are members for counties; that great endeavours have been used to inflame the kingdom; that petitions from twenty-six counties have been procured; that the city of Dublin is almost unanimous against it, and with such an opposition so circumstanced and supported, it is evident much management must be used.'<sup>1</sup>

No man can have hated the task that was imposed on him more than Cornwallis. His letters furnish a vivid picture of his feelings and of the class of men with whom he had to deal. In one of them he applied to himself with remarkable candour the lines of Swift:

From hell a viceroy devil ascends,  
His budget with corruption crammed,  
The contributions of the damned,  
Which with unsparing hand he strows  
Through Courts and Senate as he goes.

'The political jobbery of this country,' he writes, 'gets the better of me. . . . I trust that I shall live to get out of this most cursed of all situations, and most repugnant to my feelings. How I long to kick those whom my public duty obliges me to court!' 'My occupation is now of the most unpleasant nature, negotiating and jobbing with the most corrupt people under heaven. I despise and hate myself every hour for engaging in such dirty work, and am supported only by the reflection that without an Union the British Empire must be dissolved.'<sup>2</sup> About the character of the majority he had no illusions. 'The nearer the great event approaches,' he wrote, 'the more are the needy and interested senators alarmed at the effects it may possibly have on their interests and the provision for their families, and I believe that *half of our majority*

<sup>1</sup> *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 206.   <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, iii. 100-102.

would be, at least, as much delighted as any of our opponents if the measure could be defeated.’<sup>1</sup>

Castlereagh, however, who was the more immediate agent in corrupting, appears to have discharged his task with a perfect equanimity. He described it in a happy phrase as ‘to buy and secure to the Crown for ever the fee simple of Irish corruption, which has so long enfeebled the powers of Government and endangered the connection.’

It is not surprising that it should have aroused the most passionate indignation among all those who cherished the idea of Irish nationality, and who looked upon the Constitution of 1782 as the charter of Irish independence. In Parliament the speeches of Plunket and of some of his legal colleagues were masterpieces of powerful reasoning, and should be studied by all who desire to know the light in which the measure then appeared to some of the most disciplined Irish intellects. It would, indeed, be scarcely possible to find in the whole compass of parliamentary eloquence speeches breathing a more intense bitterness. ‘I will make bold to say,’ said Plunket, ‘that licentious and impious France, in all the unrestrained excess which anarchy and atheism have given birth to, has not committed a more insidious act against her enemy than is now attempted by the professed champion of the cause of civilised Europe against her friend and ally in the time of her calamity and distress—at the moment when our country is filled with British troops—when the loyal men of Ireland are fatigued and exhausted by their efforts to subdue the rebellion—efforts in which they had succeeded before those troops arrived—whilst the Habeas Corpus Act is suspended—whilst trials by court-

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<sup>1</sup> *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 228.



martial are carrying on in many parts of the kingdom—whilst the people are taught to think they have no right to meet or deliberate, and whilst the great body of them are so palsied by their fears or worn down by their exertions that even this vital question is scarcely able to rouse them from their lethargy—at a moment when we are distracted by domestic dissensions—dissensions artfully kept alive as the pretext of our present subjugation and the instrument of our future thralldom.’

‘For centuries,’ said Bushe, ‘the British Parliament and nation kept you down, shackled your commerce and paralysed your exertions, despised your characters and ridiculed your pretensions to any privileges, commercial or constitutional. She has never conceded a point to you which she could avoid, nor granted a favour which was not reluctantly distilled. They have been all wrung from her like drops of blood, and you are not in possession of a single blessing (except those which you derived from God) that has not been either purchased or extorted by the virtue of your own Parliament from the illiberality of England.’

The language of Saurin was still stronger. ‘If a Legislative Union,’ he said, ‘should be so forced upon this country against the will of its inhabitants it would be a nullity, and resistance to it would be a struggle against usurpation, and not a resistance against law. You may make it binding as a law, but you cannot make it obligatory on conscience. It will be obeyed as long as England is strong, but resistance to it will be in the abstract a duty, and the exhibition of that resistance will be a mere question of prudence.’ ‘When I take into account,’ said Burrowes, ‘the hostile feelings generated by this foul attempt, by bribery, by treason, and by force, to plunder a nation of its liberties in the hour of its distress, I do not hesitate to pronounce that

every sentiment of affection for Great Britain will perish if this measure pass, and that, instead of uniting the nations, it will be the commencement of an era of inextinguishable animosity.'

Grattan, who more than any other living man was identified with the Constitution of 1782, was outside Parliament and much broken in health when the great question of the Union was introduced, and he did not appear upon the scene during the first session of its discussion. His illness had taken a nervous form which in the opinion of those who were about him altogether incapacitated him from exciting political effort, and his star which had once shone so brightly over Irish politics, was for a time obscured or eclipsed. He had totally failed in his last parliamentary campaign to arrest the policy which, as he too truly predicted, was leading the country to rebellion, but his efforts had mortally offended the dominant faction in Parliament, and in the rage and passion and panic produced by the rebellion every effort was made to discredit him. The fact that he had been the steady advocate of parliamentary reform and Catholic Emancipation, and that these had been taken up as watchwords by the United Irishmen, and the fact that as a parliamentary leader he had come into slight and occasional contact with men who were afterwards implicated in the rebellion, were abundantly made use of. Shameful libels shamefully countenanced by men in authority were directed against him, and an absurd deposition of an obscure informer accusing him of having been sworn in as a United Irishman, though it was so false and so clearly refuted that the Government acknowledged that it could not possibly be sustained in a law court, was made the excuse for denouncing him as if he had been a convicted traitor. His name was struck off the Privy Council.

His portrait was removed by the authorities of Trinity College from their Examination Hall, and replaced by that of Lord Clare. The Corporation of Dublin disfranchised him. The Guild of Dublin Merchants struck his name off their rolls, and the tide of obloquy and ingratitude ran so fiercely against the greatest and best of living Irishmen that he retired for several months to England.

A sudden change, however, passed over the feelings of the country when the determination of the Government to abolish the Irish Parliament was announced. Those who regarded the destruction of that Parliament as the extinction of Irish liberty naturally felt that the foremost Irish orator and the author of the Constitution of 1782 must not be absent from their councils.

It was on January 15, 1800, that the Irish Parliament met for its last session, and it at once plunged into a debate on an amendment of Parsons' condemning the Union. It was one of the fiercest and most brilliant ever heard within its walls, and it extended through the whole night and far into the succeeding day. On that very day Grattan's friends purchased for him a seat for the nomination borough of Wicklow, which had just become vacant. By the consent of the sheriff the election was held at midnight. At five in the morning of the 16th Grattan was aroused from his bed, and two hours later he appeared in the House. He wore the uniform of the volunteers. He was so feeble that he could only walk with the assistance of two friends, and his head hung drooping upon his chest, but an unwonted fire sparkled in his eye, and the flush of deep emotion mantled his cheek. There was a moment's pause, an electric thrill passed through the House, and a long wild cheer burst from the galleries. Shortly afterwards he rose to speak, but his strength

failed him, and he obtained leave to address the House sitting. For a few moments his voice was so feeble that it was almost inaudible. Soon, however, was witnessed that spectacle, among the grandest in the whole range of mental phenomena, of mind asserting its supremacy over matter, of the power of a strong passion and of a great genius nerving a feeble and an emaciated frame. As the fire of oratory kindled, as the angel of enthusiasm touched those pallid lips with the living coal, as the old scenes crowded on the speaker's mind, and the old plaudits broke upon his ear, it seemed as though the force of disease was neutralised, and the buoyancy of youth restored. His voice gained a deeper power, his action a more commanding energy, his eloquence an ever-increasing brilliancy. For more than two hours he poured forth a stream of epigram, of argument, and of appeal. He traversed almost the whole of that complex question, he grappled with the various arguments of expediency the ministers had urged; but he placed the issue on the highest of grounds. 'The thing he proposes to buy is what cannot be sold—liberty.' When he at last concluded, it must have been felt by all his friends that if the Irish Parliament could have been saved by eloquence it would have been saved by him. He had been for some time vehemently denounced in Parliament, and Corry now attempted to crush him by a violent attack. Grattan, treated his adversary with contemptuous silence till the assault had been three times repeated, when he terminated the contest by a brief but crushing invective, and a duel, in which Corry was wounded, was the result.

It was evident, however, that no eloquence and no arguments could save the Constitution of Ireland. In division after division Grattan was defeated, and he saw with an ineffable anguish the edifice which he had

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done so much to construct sinking into inevitable dissolution. Night after night the contest was vainly prolonged with a feverish and impassioned earnestness. Yet, even at that period, hope was not quite extinguished in his party. They saw that a Union was inevitable, but some, at least, looked beyond it. 'I know,' said Goold, 'that the ministers must succeed, yet I will not go away with an aching heart, because I know that the liberties of the people must ultimately triumph. The people must at present submit, because they cannot resist 120,000 armed men; but the period will occur when, as in 1782, England may be weak, and Ireland sufficiently strong to recover her lost liberties.' Nor were the last words of Grattan devoid of hope: 'The Constitution,' he exclaimed, 'may for a time be lost, but the character of the people cannot be lost. The ministers of the Crown may perhaps at length find out that it is not so easy to put down for ever an ancient and respectable nation by abilities, however great, or by corruption, however irresistible. Liberty may repair her golden beams, and with redoubled heat animate the country. The cry of loyalty will not long continue against the principles of liberty. Loyalty is a noble, a judicious, and a capacious principle, but in these countries, loyalty distinct from liberty is corruption, not loyalty. The cry of the connection will not in the end avail against the principles of liberty. Connection is a wise and a profound policy, but connection without an Irish Parliament is connection without its own principle, without analogy of condition, without the pride of honour that should attend it—is innovation, is peril, is subjugation—not connection. . . . Identification is a solid and Imperial maxim, necessary for the preservation of freedom, necessary for that of empire, but without union of hearts, with a separate

government, and without a separate parliament, identification is extinction, is dishonour, is conquest not—identification. Yet I do not give up my country. I see her in a swoon, but she is not dead. Though in her tomb she lies helpless and motionless, still there is on her lips a spirit of life, and on her cheek a glow of beauty:

Thou art not conquered: beauty's ensign yet  
Is crimson in thy lips and in thy cheeks,  
And death's pale flag is not advanced there.

While a plank of the vessel stands together, I will not leave her. Let the courtier present his flimsy sail, and carry the light bark of his faith with every new breath of wind; I will remain anchored here with fidelity to the fortunes of my country, faithful to her freedom, faithful to her fall.' These were the last words of Grattan in the Irish Parliament.

In England, Sheridan resisted the measure at every step of its progress with persevering earnestness. He moved that its consideration should be delayed till the sentiments of the people of Ireland had been ascertained, but his motion was defeated by 30 to 206. 'I would have fought for that Irish Parliament,' he afterwards exclaimed to Grattan—'ay, up to the knees in blood!' Among the speakers on the measure in the House of Lords was Lord Byron, who described it as the 'union of the shark with its prey.' All opposition, however, was fruitless, and the Bill received the royal assent on August 1.

Attempts have been made by much special pleading and by the suppression of great masses of antagonistic facts to disguise the character of this transaction. It is not, however, by such travesties of history that the

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Union can be properly defended. What may be truly said is that Pitt in the whole of his Irish policy was actuated only by public motives, and not by any considerations of party advantage or personal ambition, and that no Lord Lieutenant was ever more purely disinterested than Lord Cornwallis. The conviction of these men was that in the existing state of Ireland the Constitution of 1782 could not prove permanent; that it must necessarily lead to a collision between the two legislatures and probably eventually to a disruption of the Empire. In the midst of a most dangerous war and at a time when Ireland was still torn by savage anarchy and fierce contending passions, they believed that it was possible by one great measure to consolidate the Empire and at the same time to grant such favours to the Catholic population as would set at rest the most dangerous questions that distracted the country, and gradually assuage the bitterness of civil war.

If the Irish Parliament had been a disaffected body; if it had consisted mainly or in any considerable degree of men like the majority of the present representatives of Ireland in the Imperial Parliament, who are in habitual hostility to the interests of the Empire and in habitual sympathy with its enemies, I do not think the means by which the Union was carried would have been greatly blamed. The existence of such an assembly exercising all the moral and administrative powers of an independent Parliament in a country which lies only twenty-five miles from the British coast, and is of vital importance to its security, would be a danger of the first magnitude, and at a time when England was engaged in a life and death struggle with the power of Napoleon its abolition would have been an object of capital importance. Whether it was effected by a *coup d'état* or by the more pacific means that were actually

adopted would have signified but little. A supreme State necessity would have been its justification, and in the ethics of politics the safety of the State must dominate over all other considerations.

It cannot, however, be too clearly understood that this was not the situation in Ireland. The Irish Parliament was an intensely loyal body, which had invariably done all that was in its power to support England in her foreign struggles; which had just signalised itself by suppressing rebellion with drastic severity; which contained a much smaller number of opponents of the war and sympathisers with France than the Parliament of Great Britain. As far as the immediate security of England was concerned there was no reason whatever for its abolition. It was only with a view to distant contingencies and on the broad lines of general policy that the measure could be defended. Even if it was in itself unquestionably good, Pitt should not, in my opinion, under such circumstances have forced it through until a majority of the members for the county constituencies and for the great towns had been prepared to support it; until martial law had been abolished and the panic of the rebellion had gone down; until a dissolution on the question had shown that there was a real preponderance of independent opinion in its favour; until he had obtained a moral certainty that he could carry in the Imperial Parliament the great measures of relief which he had intended to follow it.

As is well known, he intended to make the Union a part of a large policy of conciliation, including the admission of Catholics into the Imperial Parliament, the commutation of tithes and the payment of the priests. This scheme has been represented as an extraordinary instance of political genius. Lord Macaulay, who has done more than any other writer to accredit



this opinion, has described Pitt's project of combining in a single measure the Legislative Union of the two countries, the emancipation of the Catholics, and the payment of their priests, as 'a scheme of policy so grand and simple, so righteous and so humane, that it would alone entitle him to a high place among statesmen.' Such a judgment seems to me entirely erroneous. The project of a Union, and the project of settling the Catholic question by admitting Catholics to Parliament, and by paying their priests, were no novelties. They had for years been commonplace subjects of discussion in political circles; and one of the standard arguments against emancipating the Catholics had been that it would be dangerous to give them such power in a local Parliament. The expediency of combining the two projects was perfectly obvious. The idea was so self-evident that it must have been suggested at a hundred dinner-tables, and it is hardly conceivable that it should not have occurred to any statesman who approved of both measures, and who was seeking to make the first popular in Ireland. The Union was emphatically one of that class of measures in which the scope for statesmanship lies not in the conception but in the execution. Had Pitt carried it without offending the national sentiment; had he enabled the majority of the Irish people to look back on it with affection or with pride; had he made it the means of allaying discontent and promoting loyalty, he would, indeed, have achieved a feat of consummate statesmanship.

Unfortunately, the political condition of Ireland one hundred years after the Union furnishes an only too conclusive proof of his failure. Burke, in his 'Letters on a Regicide Peace,' when reviewing the elements of strength on which England could confide in

her struggle with revolutionary France, placed in the very first rank the co-operation of Ireland. At the present day it is to be feared that most impartial men would regard Ireland in the event of a great European war rather as a source of weakness than of strength. After the lapse of a century, four-fifths of the Irish representatives are in open hostility to the Union, and indeed to the Empire. It is unfortunately incontestable that the lower orders in Ireland show themselves as opposed to the system of government under which they live as the Hungarian people have ever been to Austrian or the Roman people to Papal rule; that Irish disloyalty is multiplying enemies of England wherever the English tongue is spoken; and that multitudes of Irish Catholics still profess to look back with affection to the Irish Parliament, although no Catholic could sit within its walls; although it was only during the last seven years of its independent existence that Catholics could vote for its members; although it consisted mainly of the very class whom it has become a great object of Irish popular politics to ruin or to expel; although its last act was the suppression of a rebellion whose leaders are now the popular heroes of Ireland. Whatever evils the Union may have averted, whatever benefits it may have bestowed, it certainly cannot be said to have made Ireland a loyal country. Among its opponents were many of the most loyal men in Ireland; and Lord Charlemont, who died shortly before the measure was consummated, summed up the feelings of many in the emphatic sentence with which he protested against it. 'It would more than any other measure,' he said, 'contribute to the separation of two countries, the perpetual connection of which is one of the warmest wishes of my heart.'

There can be little doubt that this was mainly due

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to the manner in which the Catholic question was treated. The first great question before the English ministers was whether the admission of Catholics to the Imperial Parliament should be made a part of the Act of Union. Cornwallis in Ireland, and Dundas in England, greatly desired it; Cornwallis invariably maintained that the ultimate success of the Union depended mainly upon the speedy concession of Catholic Emancipation, and Canning had advised Pitt to postpone the Union scheme until a period in which he could combine it with that measure. Of the wishes of Pitt there could be little doubt, but the difficulties before him were insuperable. Clare, who was the strongest of the Irish supporters of the Union, was also the bitterest opponent of Catholic Emancipation, and he commanded many votes in both Houses. He was quite aware that the ministers began the Union campaign full of 'Popish projects,' but he believed that he had induced them definitely to abandon them. Though their most powerful supporter, he appears to have been kept altogether in the dark about the negotiations into which they entered with the Catholic prelates<sup>1</sup> and he himself valued the Union largely as a means of defeating altogether the hopes of the Catholics. The King was in a somewhat similar position. He had long since announced his inexorable hostility to the admission of Catholics to

<sup>1</sup> Lord Holland says: 'Lord Hobart afterwards assured me that both he and Lord Clare had been deceived by Mr. Pitt, and that he would have voted against the Union had he suspected at the time that it was connected with any project of extending the concessions already made to the Irish Catholics. The present Lord Clare's

report of his father's views of the whole matter tallies with this account of the transaction.'—*Memoirs of the Whig Party*, i. 162. See, too, on the indignation of Lord Clare at what he called the 'deception' that was practised on him, the *Castlereagh Correspondence*, iv. 47, 50.

Parliament, placing his opposition on the highest moral grounds and declaring that he could not consent to such a measure without breaking his Coronation Oath.

At the same time the ministers, while anxious not to alienate the anti-Catholic followers of Clare, were sincerely desirous of extending constitutional privileges to the Catholics. Cornwallis warned them that in the existing state of Ireland a strenuous Catholic opposition would make it impossible to carry the Union, and they recognised that the success of the Union depended upon its bringing with it some boon that might be sufficiently great to counteract in some measure its extreme unpopularity. The Scotch Union had thrown open to Scotchmen the whole trade of the English Colonies in America from which they had before been excluded; had relieved an intense poverty, and brought with it a great and speedy advance of commercial prosperity. But this colonial trade had been thrown open to Irishmen in 1779, and the last decades of the Irish Parliament had been marked by great and incontestable and rapidly increasing material prosperity. The establishment of free trade between Great Britain and Ireland by the Union was a real boon, but it was not sufficiently great or sufficiently calculated to strike the imagination, nor did it bring any such immediate increase of wealth as to counteract the evil effects of the measure. ~~The great Catholic concessions alone could have done this, and on the conduct of the ministers on this momentous occasion the future loyalty of the Irish Catholics largely depended.~~

Lord Castlereagh entered into confidential relations with the Catholic bishops at the very beginning of 1799, with the object of securing their support for the Union. The first inducement he put forward was that, whatever postponement there might be of the political

claims of the Catholic laity, the Government desired without delay to make an independent provision for the Catholic priesthood under regulations and safeguards such as the bishops would accept as compatible with their doctrines, discipline and influence.

This step proved perfectly successful, and it at once secured the allegiance of the Catholic episcopacy to the Union. At a meeting which was held at Maynooth in the middle of January, the four archbishops and the six senior Catholic bishops agreed to accept with gratitude the payment of the priests, and at the same time to grant the Government a right of veto over all future episcopal appointments as a guarantee of their loyalty. In the next generation the Catholic episcopacy took a directly opposite course, and the veto controversy greatly retarded Catholic Emancipation, but it should never be forgotten that in January 1799, the bishops by a vote, which was accepted as the unanimous voice of the Irish episcopacy, agreed to the Government terms, and agreed also that the nomination of all parish priests with a certificate that they had taken the oath of allegiance should be regularly certified to the Government. The endowment of the priests was intended to correspond with the increase of the *Regium Donum* to the Presbyterian ministers, and both measures were a part of the Union campaign. If these measures had been carried out, the attitude of the Catholic clergy towards England would probably have been materially modified.

The negotiations about the political claims of the Catholics were more intricate and more prolonged. The ministers agreed that it was impossible to carry Catholic Emancipation concurrently with the Union, and the bishops, to whom they confided their conclusion, fully acquiesced in the postponement. On two

points the Government announced a clear and definite decision. One was that they were resolved inexorably, and for all future time, and by all the means in their power, to oppose the admission of Catholics into a separate Irish Parliament. With the enormous influence over that Parliament which they possessed, this amounted to an absolute proscription, from which the Catholics could only escape by a separation from England or a Legislative Union. The other point was that they would not permit any clause to be inserted in the Act of Union which might be inconsistent with the future admission of Catholics into the Imperial Parliament. The oaths excluding Catholics were maintained, but by the fourth Article of the Union they were retained only 'until the Parliament of the United Kingdom shall otherwise provide.'

At the same time the more important Government pronouncements, both in England and Ireland, insisted upon the argument that the Union would make an extension of constitutional rights to the Catholics possible without endangering the Irish Protestant Establishment. It was found, however, after the defeat of the Union measure in 1799, that something more than generalities was required. The opposition of Dublin, of the large majority of county members and of the bulk of the Protestants alarmed Lord Castlereagh, and there were clear signs that Foster and some of the other opponents of Catholic Emancipation were now ready to make overtures to the Catholics, offering to support their claims if they would only heartily assist them in defeating the Union. Castlereagh had no doubt that the Catholics would be almost unanimously against the Union if only they believed that it was in the will and power of Foster and the Opposition to admit them into the Irish Parliament. He also stated to the English

Cabinet the opinion of the Irish Government 'that circumstanced as the parliamentary interests and the Protestant feelings then were, the measure could not be carried if the Catholics were embarked in an active opposition to it, and that their opposition would be unanimous and zealous if they had reason to suppose that the sentiments of ministers would remain unchanged in respect to their exclusion, while the measure of Union in itself might give them additional means of disappointing their hopes.' Up to the present, he said, the leading Catholics had failed in spite of many efforts to bring Government to a clear explanation about the future influence of the Union upon their cause, and were in consequence, with some exceptions, either neutral or hostile, 'the former entertaining hopes, but not inclining to support decidedly without some encouragement from Government; the latter entirely hostile, from a persuasion that it would so strengthen the Protestant interest as to perpetuate their exclusion.' At the same time the friends of the Government by flattering the hopes of the Catholics had produced some favourable impression in Cork, Tipperary and Galway.<sup>1</sup>

Under these circumstances, in the autumn of 1799 Lord Cornwallis directed Castlereagh, who was then in England, to urge upon the Cabinet the necessity of obtaining clearer instructions as to how far he was authorised to go in negotiating for Catholic support, and Castlereagh has given a full account of the result of the Cabinet meeting on the subject. 'Some doubt,' he wrote to Cornwallis, 'was entertained as to the possibility of admitting Catholics into some of the higher offices, and ministers apprehended considerable repugnance to the measure in many quarters, and particularly

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<sup>1</sup> *Castlereagh Correspondence*, iv. 8-12.

It is not, I think, surprising that this should have been accepted by the Catholic leaders as practically tantamount to a pledge. The pretended unanimity of the Cabinet in favour of Catholic Emancipation, in fact, did not exist. No difference of opinion, it is true, was expressed when the subject was referred to in 1799, but when the question was formally brought forward in the Cabinet in 1801, and when the hostility of the King was known, it appeared that no less than five of its members were opposed to emancipation;<sup>1</sup> but of

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this the Catholic leaders could know nothing. They were probably aware that the King was hostile to emancipation, but they could not know that both in 1795 and 1798 he had distinctly declared that his objections to it were insuperable and based on grounds of conscience,<sup>1</sup> and that the overtures made to them were made with a perfect knowledge of his sentiments, without any attempt to learn how far those sentiments might be modified,<sup>2</sup> or any determination to exert the full ministerial power in their favour. They only knew that the chief Irish representatives of perhaps the strongest government that ever existed in England represented the Cabinet as unanimously in favour of emancipation, and on that ground solicited their support. Government influence alone had defeated emancipation in 1795. They were told that the Government objection to it would be obviated by a Union, and they inferred that by carrying the Union they were carrying their cause.

Pitt and Castlereagh undoubtedly wished that it should be carried, but their immediate object was to hold out hopes sufficient to secure Catholic support or neutrality without committing themselves to a distinct pledge: and this end was dexterously accomplished. A few sentences written by Lord Castlereagh in 1799

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<sup>1</sup>See the very remarkable paper drawn up by the King in 1795, in Campbell's *Lives of the Chancellors*, viii. 173-175; and his letters to Pitt in 1798 and 1801, in Stanhope's *Life of Pitt*, iii. Appendix xvi., xxviii.-xxix.

<sup>2</sup>Adolphus, who had much private information of the proceedings at Court, fully confirms the fact that the over-

tures to the Irish Catholics were made without the King's privy, and with a full knowledge of his sentiments upon the subject, in the hope that his Majesty, after the Union had taken place, seeing that Catholic Emancipation was indispensable, would agree to it. —*History of England*, vii. 443-446.

explain the calculation that was made. 'The Catholics,' he says, 'if offered equality without a Union will probably prefer it to equality with a Union; for in the latter case they must ever be content with inferiority, in the former they would probably by degrees gain ascendancy. . . . Were the Catholic question to be now carried, the great argument for a Union would be lost, at least as far as the Catholics are concerned; it seems, therefore, more important than ever for Government to resist its adoption, on the ground that without a Union it must be destructive; with it, that it may be safe. I conceive the true policy is, by a steady resistance of [the Catholic] claims so long as the countries remain separate, to make them feel that they can be carried only with us through an Union.'<sup>1</sup>

The ministers acted in the same way about the two great questions of the payment of the priests and the commutation of tithes. As early as 1798, Pitt, in discussing the chances of a Union, had written, 'with respect to a provision for the Catholic clergy and some arrangement respecting tithes, I am happy to find an uniform opinion in favour of the proposal among all the Irish I have seen; and I am more and more convinced that those measures, with some effectual mode to enforce the residence of all ranks of the Protestant clergy, offer the best chance of gradually putting an end to the evils most felt in Ireland.'<sup>2</sup> The first measure, as we have seen, was officially held out to the Catholic clergy as a chief reason why they should support the Union, and Lord Castlereagh was directed, if the measure was introduced by the Opposition in the

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<sup>1</sup> *Castlereagh Correspondence*, ii. 140, 171. There are other passages to the same effect in the *Correspondence*.

<sup>2</sup> Stanhope's *Life of Pitt*, iii. 161.

Irish Parliament, to meet it by dilatory tactics without making any positive declaration against it. The second measure was one which Grattan had long and strenuously advocated, but the Irish minister was directed to say that no change should be made in the tithe system except by an Imperial Parliament. If, however, the Union were carried it was the intention of Government to deal with the question.

It is a curious and interesting question how far these offers affected the opinions of the Irish Catholics about the Union. The judgment of Cornwallis as disclosed in his letters fluctuated greatly on the subject, ranging from sanguine hope to almost complete despair. The truth seems to be that the overwhelming majority of the Catholics, including multitudes who had been granted the suffrage in 1793, were far too poor and ignorant and degraded to have any political convictions, and were totally indifferent to the fate of the Irish Parliament. As Cornwallis came gradually to see, religious fanaticism was the one sentiment that really swayed them, and he believed that the mass of the people of Ireland hated equally the Government and the Opposition, sympathised fully with the rebels, and would now gladly welcome a French invasion. There was, however, in the country a considerable body of loyal and educated Catholic opinion, and it is unquestionable that a large, an influential, perhaps a preponderating portion of this decidedly supported the Union. The Irish Government made great use of the formal communication they had received from England of the favourable sentiments of the English Cabinet. As Lord Castlereagh says, 'their efforts were very generally successful, and the advantage derived from them was highly useful, particularly in depriving the Opposition of the means they otherwise would have had in

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the southern and western counties of making an impression on the county members.'<sup>1</sup>

Opinion in this class was, no doubt, greatly divided. Catholic as well as Protestant Dublin was almost unanimously hostile to the Union. There were some distinctively Catholic addresses against it, though there were also several in its favour, and several of the great Catholic towns were prominent in their opposition. It is remarkable, however, that in the enumeration of these towns that was made in the anti-Union speeches, Cork, which was then the second city in Ireland, does not appear. Its Corporation had petitioned in favour of the Union. Its Catholic bishop, Dr. Moylan, was one of its most strenuous advocates, and though here, as elsewhere, Catholic opinion was divided, a strong party in this great Catholic city was with the Government. It was remembered that while the Scotch Union was followed by a decadence of Edinburgh, Glasgow, the second city of Scotland, speedily rose to extraordinary prosperity, and in the Government pamphlet drawn up by Coke to recommend the Union, it was stated that if this measure were carried, a Government dockyard, like those of Portsmouth and Plymouth, was likely to be established at Cork, and it would become one of the great maritime centres of the Empire.

But beyond all other classes the Catholic bishops seem to have been united in favour of the Union. Troy, the Archbishop of Dublin, led the party with remarkable skill and energy, and he was actively supported by the Catholic Archbishops of Armagh, Tuam and Cashel, and by the Bishops of Cork, Wexford, Meath and Kilkenny. Dr. Bodkin, who had long been the agent of the majority of the secular prelates at

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<sup>1</sup> *Castlereagh Correspondence*, iv. 11.

Rome; Arthur O'Leary, who was incomparably the most brilliant and popular writer among the Irish Catholics; Lord Kenmare and Lord Fingall, who were the most prominent leaders among the Catholic gentry, were all upon this side, and priests were the most active agents in obtaining addresses for the Union. One most critical election took place during the struggle. Sir John Parnell, who was among the ablest and most respected members of the House of Commons, had been dismissed from the office of Chancellor of the Exchequer on account of his opposition to the Union, and Corry, the new Chancellor of the Exchequer, had to face a contested election in an open constituency. He won the seat at Newry mainly through the solid support of the Catholic voters, who, under the direction of Archbishop Troy, voted unanimously for him.

The violence of the Orange opposition to the Union no doubt tended to strengthen the Catholic feeling in its favour, and Cornwallis was well known to have strong Catholic sympathies. Next to the consolidation of the Empire, he always regarded the advantage to the Catholics as the chief object of the Union. By taking the rule of Ireland out of the hands of an ascendent class, now largely impregnated with Orangism and embittered by the passions of Civil War: by making it possible to grant them constitutional equality, he hoped to win their support, and to a considerable degree he undoubtedly obtained it. Sir Henry Parnell, who was a very high authority on the history of those times, goes, indeed, farther than I should. In his great speech on the disturbances of Ireland in 1823, reviewing the history of the Union, he said, 'The Protestants generally opposed the measure, but the Catholics as generally supported it; and had it not been for their support, it is now universally admitted that the measure

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could not have been carried. They were the party to whom the possession of the Constitution was everything in place of an Irish Parliament.'<sup>1</sup>

It was an uncertain and a provisional support, and the Catholic bishops and priests, who in Ireland chiefly favoured the Legislative Union, looked mainly if not exclusively to ecclesiastical objects; but, when all due allowance is made, the measure received an amount of Catholic support that promised well for its future success. Passions rise and fall in Ireland quicker than in England, and it is certain that in the last days of the Union struggle the feeling of the country against it had considerably gone down, and there was an increased disposition to accept the inevitable. If the critical moment had been seized and the great Catholic measures speedily granted, a large part of its unpopularity might have disappeared.

As is well known, the hopes of the Catholics were utterly disappointed, and when the Union was carried they soon found that their emancipation seemed far more remote than it had been under the Irish Parliament in 1793 and 1795.

It appeared, indeed, at first as though the Government would do everything that could be expected. In the first King's Speech after the Union, the sovereign was made to describe it as the happiest event of his reign; 'being persuaded,' as the Speech continued, 'that nothing could so effectually contribute to extend to my Irish subjects the full participation of the blessings derived from the British Constitution.' It is not very clear what meaning these expressions conveyed to the sovereign who used them; but the Catholic leaders naturally read them in the light of the negotiations

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<sup>1</sup> See Parnell's separately published speech, p. 58.

that had taken place, and as naturally interpreted them as a promise of emancipation. They assumed that the Catholics, who constituted three-quarters of the Irish people, were included under the denomination of 'Irish subjects,' and that the right of sitting in Parliament was one of the blessings of the Constitution.

It soon, however, appeared that the King was vehemently opposed to emancipation; and the Chancellor, Lord Loughborough, through selfish, and the Primates of England and Ireland through ecclesiastical, motives inflamed his opposition. While his ministers were persuading the Catholics to acquiesce in the Union by holding out to them the hope that it would secure their emancipation, the King was basing his policy on a directly opposite calculation. 'My inclination to the Union with Ireland,' he wrote in February 1801, 'was chiefly founded on a trust that the uniting of the Established Churches of the two Kingdoms would for ever shut the door to any further measures with respect to the Roman Catholics.' The language which had been held to the Catholics, and in reliance on which they had in general abstained from opposing the Union, had been held entirely without his knowledge and in opposition to his known wishes, though his ministers probably believed that once the Union was carried he would find it necessary to yield. This was in itself sufficiently culpable; but, after all that had been said and done, it is at least plain that Pitt was under the strongest moral obligation to do the utmost in his power to carry the measure. The King talked of abdicating if it were passed, but even that alternative should have been faced; though it should not be forgotten that the King was accustomed to use such threats whenever he urgently desired to carry his point, and that his language about the recognition of the independence of America,

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and about the admission of Fox into his Cabinet, was quite as strong as his language about Catholic Emancipation. It was a matter of vital importance to the future prosperity of the Empire that the Catholics should at this time have been emancipated, and there is not much doubt that Pitt could have carried the measure had he determined it.

He did, it is true, resign office when the King refused to consent to it; but there has seldom been a resignation which deserves less credit. The step was evidently taken solely because it was impossible that he could have acted otherwise with any decorum or without a palpable loss of character, and because Lord Grenville and some of his other colleagues had a strong and honourable sense of their duty to the Catholics. It is, however, quite plain that Pitt, having obtained the service he required from the Catholics, had very little wish to incur for their sakes any serious difficulty he could possibly avoid, and was ready, on the first decent pretext, to adjourn indefinitely a dangerous and embarrassing question. He resigned office into the hands of Addington, whom he regarded as a mere creature of his own, and from whom he imagined he might at any time resume it. He resigned it at a moment which was peculiarly convenient to him, because it had become necessary to negotiate with Napoleon, and the antecedents of Pitt rendered such a negotiation more difficult and humiliating for him than for any other English statesman.<sup>1</sup> He resigned it with

<sup>1</sup> I have no doubt that the Catholic question was the real as well as the ostensible cause of the resignation, but the consideration in the text was an obvious one, and it greatly mitigated the sacrifice. Dun-

das said of Addington, 'If these new ministers stay in and make peace, it will only smooth matters the more for us afterwards,' and Lord Malmesbury, who records this saying, mentions the impression that 'Pitt



much display of public principle, because the King would not consent to Catholic Emancipation; but when the transfer of office had been effected, and when the agitation produced by the transaction threw the King into one of his many attacks of temporary insanity, Pitt immediately availed himself of the opportunity to extricate himself from a political embarrassment by finally abandoning the Catholics. That his position, in consequence of the King's attack, was a very delicate one may be readily admitted; but there was also a grave question of honour and of national policy to be considered; and the utmost the most sensitive delicacy required was that he should have abstained at the time of the King's illness from pressing the Emancipation of the Catholics. But this was not the course which he adopted. Ostensibly through attachment to their cause he resigned his office into the hands of an anti-Catholic statesman, who, as we now know, assumed it at his express desire. Only three weeks later, when the King had recovered, when Addington had formed his ministry without difficulty, and when all was proceeding smoothly, he volunteered the announcement to the King that he would never during the King's life bring forward the Catholic question; and he desired by this means, if the King or Addington would take the first step, to return to power.

This was the end of the 'unalterable sense of public duty' which had led him, as he declared three weeks before, to resign office because he was not allowed to bring in the Catholic question with his Majesty's 'full

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is inclined to let this ministry remain in office long enough to make peace, and then turn them out.'—*Malmesbury Diaries*, iv. 39-40. See, too,

a remarkable letter by Dean Milman in Lewis's *Administrations of Great Britain*, p. 270.

concurrence, and with the whole weight of Government. This was the end of all the hopes by which Castlereagh had lulled to sleep the Catholic opposition to the Union. Addington, it is true, refused to be treated as a mere puppet, and to resign the dignity he had just been entreated to assume; but Pitt's definite betrayal of the Catholic cause was only postponed. He soon became minister again, and he resumed the reins of power on the understanding that he would not bring in Catholic Emancipation during the King's lifetime, and that he would not suffer it to be carried.

There remained the two great questions of the payment of the priests and the commutation of tithes. Both of these measures had been held out to the Catholics as boons to be obtained by the Union, and Pitt had clearly recognised their importance. They were, indeed, far more really important than the admission of a few Catholic gentry to the Imperial Parliament, and they could have been carried with far less difficulty and opposition. But Pitt had gained what he wanted and moved the Catholic question out of his way, and he accordingly refused to take the smallest trouble on the subject. His ministry was now very weak. The war was again raging, and he had no wish to raise any difficult internal question. The first measure was never carried, and the tithe system was allowed to remain for a whole generation the most prolific source of crime and agitation in Ireland.

In the meantime great apprehension was felt about the attitude of the Irish Catholics. Except during the brief interval of tranquillity which followed the peace of Amiens, England was engaged in a desperate struggle with France, and Catholic disloyalty appeared proportionately terrible. Immediately upon the resignation of Pitt and the installation of a new and anti-Catholic

ministry, the Lord Lieutenant, Lord Cornwallis, drew up and privately circulated among the Catholic leaders a paper, in which he earnestly exhorted them to patience under their disappointment, warned them against Jacobinical associations, and expatiated upon the great advantage their cause had gained in so many eminent statesmen being pledged not to take office without carrying it.

This paper was unofficial, but, emanating as it did from the Lord Lieutenant, it had naturally great weight. It proved, however, to be one more added to the many deceptions the Irish Catholics experienced. Lord Cornwallis, who immediately after resigned his office, subsequently admitted that he had no authority for the statement that the retiring ministers were pledged to abstain from office till they could carry Catholic Emancipation.<sup>1</sup> He had merely drawn an inference—though it must be admitted a very natural inference—from the situation. Whatever may have been the opinion of others, *he* at least believed that the communications he had made to the Catholic leaders amounted to a moral pledge. When Pitt, three weeks after his resignation, offered to abandon the Catholics, he made none of his colleagues his confidants except Dundas; but on his return to office the attitude he resolved to assume became manifest. The Catholics acted with signal moderation. They would at this time have gladly accepted emancipation accompanied by those safeguards which a few years later were so scornfully rejected. They abstained from all political agitation that might embarrass the Government; and it was only in 1805 that their leaders brought over to London a petition for emancipation, which they asked

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<sup>1</sup> *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 347-349.

Pitt, who was then in power, to present and to support. He not only refused to do so, but even declared that he would oppose it; and, after a brilliant debate, the Catholics were defeated by an overwhelming majority through his influence. Is it surprising that O'Connell found them apt scholars when he taught them to exchange a policy of moderation for one of violent agitation?

There is great reason to believe that the enduring unpopularity of the Union was much more due to these things, and to the time and circumstances under which the measure was forced through, than to its own demerits. Many reasonable men had come to see that the Constitution of 1782 could not have lasted, and that the state of feeling which had been produced in Ireland by the events of the closing years of the eighteenth century had immensely diminished the chances of the successful working of a separate Parliament. It is probable that in quieter times a genuine movement for a Union would have arisen in Ireland, though it is also probable that it would have been for a Union on a more federal basis than that which was actually adopted.

One great evil resulting from the measure—the expense of carrying witnesses to London for the trial of contested elections and for private parliamentary business—was anticipated by Portland and Pitt, and they suggested a plan which appears to have been favourably received by the Cabinet for at least diminishing it. They proposed to enable the Chairman of Quarter Sessions or the Sheriff of the county to summon the contending parties in Ireland; to reduce their evidence to writing which was to be certified to the Speaker in London, and thus to make it possible to dispense with their actual presence in the metropolis. It was sug-

gested that, though it would be difficult to embody the various regulations such a proceeding would require in an article of the Union, its principle might at least be stated in the Act, leaving the details to be settled by the United Parliament. Probably through a desire to avoid all unnecessary subjects of controversy this proposal was dropped, and the evil it was intended to remedy continued through the whole century. It was indeed immensely aggravated as the new powers granted to municipalities and trading corporations, and the vast enterprises in railways, telegraphs, and gas and electric lighting, growing out of nineteenth century inventions, multiplied the amount and the cost of Irish private business in Parliament.<sup>1</sup>

The financial part of the Union also completely broke down. The proportion which Ireland was bound to pay to Imperial taxation was pronounced by the best financial authorities in the Irish Parliament to be larger than she could bear, and they predicted that the Union would ultimately produce an amalgamation of debts and an identification of taxation which would be exceedingly injurious to the poorer country. The Irish National Debt had indeed increased with terrible rapidity during the last seven years of the eighteenth century, owing to the great French war and the rebellion, but it was still only about twenty-eight and a half millions, while the debt of Great Britain exceeded four hundred and forty-six millions, and in times of peace the taxation of Ireland was probably below that of any considerable country in Europe. It was contended in Ireland that Irish taxation would soon be raised to the

<sup>1</sup> See *Castlereagh Correspondence*, ii. 56-57. Lord Ashbourne's *Pitt*, p. 286-287. See, too, an excellent pamphlet on

'Private Bill Procedure' by Arthur W. Samuels, Q.C. (1899).

English level, but this was certainly not the intention of the English ministers. The provisions for keeping the debt and the taxation of Ireland separate from those of Great Britain as long as the proportionate resources of the two countries were different were intended, in the words of Lord Castlereagh, to give Ireland 'the utmost possible security that she cannot be taxed beyond the measure of her comparative ability, and that the ratio of her contribution must ever correspond with her relative wealth and prosperity.'

No one ever stated in clearer or more impressive language than Pitt the economical truth, that identical taxation falling upon two countries differing widely in their level of wealth must press with a special weight on the poorer country, and although the English ministers did undoubtedly contemplate a time when the taxation of the two islands should be indiscriminate, they meant this only to take place when Ireland had substantially reached the English level of prosperity. 'It must be evident,' Lord Castlereagh said, 'that if our manufactures keep pace in advancement for the next twenty years with the progress they have made in the last twenty years, they may, at the expiration of it, be fully able to cope with the British, and that the two kingdoms may be safely left, like any two counties of the same kingdom, to a free competition.'

Perhaps, if the French war had speedily ceased, things might have turned out differently. As it was, Ireland proved utterly incapable of paying her stipulated share. Within sixteen years she became bankrupt, and the amalgamation of debts which then took place was probably to her advantage. For a little more than half a century after the Union she enjoyed large exemptions from English taxation. English taxes on different articles and forms of industry in the first half

of the nineteenth century were almost innumerable, and a large proportion of them had never been extended to Ireland. For several years after 1817 there were taxes amounting to twenty millions which were imposed on Great Britain, and from which Ireland was exempted. As late as 1845 the exemptions amounted to considerably more than fourteen millions.<sup>1</sup> But at last, and at a time when the difference between the relative wealth of the two islands was far greater than at the time of the Union, these exemptions were nearly all abolished, and the predicted assimilation of Irish to British taxation was substantially effected.

The great free trade movement also profoundly altered the relative position of the two islands. It brought immense prosperity in its train, but it was a prosperity that centred chiefly on the manufacturing and commercial portions of the kingdom, and in a less degree on the agricultural districts that were contiguous to them. Ireland, which in three provinces is almost purely agricultural, derived comparatively little benefit, and that benefit was counterbalanced, and more than counterbalanced, by great sacrifices. The system of free trade, of *laissez faire*, of unrestricted competition is admirably adapted for a wealthy people, pervaded by an intense industrial energy, and possessing in a pre-eminent degree both the qualities and resources that are most needed for the battle of life. It is not likely to be equally suited to a poor country and to a people whose industrial qualities are far below the average of Europe. Free trade meant the abolition of a crowd of English taxes from which Ireland had been exempt, and thus altered seriously the balance of taxation, and it at the same time deprived Ireland of her

<sup>1</sup> *Report on the Financial Relations between Great Britain and Ireland* (1896), p. 155.

Free  
Trade  
in  
Ireland

great agricultural monopolies and preferences in the English market. At the close of fifty years after the Union her condition was probably in most respects worse than at the beginning, for any advantages she might have gained were more than counterbalanced by the reckless multiplication of an ignorant, improvident, pauper tenantry, leading inevitably to the catastrophe of the famine.

After the great depopulation of the famine the material prosperity of the Irish people, no doubt, steadily and greatly improved. A hundred years of constant legislation have conferred many benefits on Ireland. Full access to all the resources, to all the prizes, to all the gigantic fields of enterprise of the greatest Empire in the world has been an incalculable blessing to her more energetic sons, but it has benefited Irishmen more than Ireland, and for a long period, and in all ranks, the best and healthiest elements in the nation have sought their career in other lands. Ireland has advanced in material prosperity, but she has done so at a far slower rate than either England or Scotland, while her proportionate place in the Empire has rapidly dwindled. At the beginning of the century the total population of the two islands was about fifteen millions, and of these probably rather more than four and a half millions were in Ireland. At the end of the century the population of Ireland was slightly less than at the time of the Union, while the population of Great Britain had more than trebled. Of the changes in the comparative wealth of two countries it is impossible to speak with absolute precision, but the broad lines can hardly be disputed. The English statesmen who made the Union estimated the taxable capacity of Ireland in 1800 at two-seventeenths of that of the Empire. They provided that her contribution



to the annual expenditure of the United Kingdom should be in the proportion of two parts to fifteen parts paid by Great Britain, that is to say, as 1 to 7½. None of the very able financial authorities who drew up the report on the Financial Relations of Great Britain and Ireland in 1896 placed the taxable capacity of Ireland in that year higher than one-twentieth of that of the United Kingdom; most of them believed it to be considerably less, and the relative difference is steadily increasing.

All these things are not the consequences of the Union, but they help to explain why it has never been the success which was predicted. Moral causes deeply rooted in Irish life have played a great part in retarding the prosperity of Ireland, and it is, indeed, on the moral side that the predictions of 1800 were most signally falsified. It was foretold that it would take Irish politics wholly out of the sphere of English faction; that it would blend the two nations so effectually in civilisation, interests and sentiments that it would be a matter of indifference from what part of the Empire the representatives were drawn; that it would rally all classes and creeds in an undistinguished loyalty to the throne.

There is one aspect of the Union which has been much neglected by English writers, but which it is very necessary for those who would understand the sentiments of Grattan and his colleagues to bear constantly in mind. They valued the Irish Parliament not merely as the centre and organ of a strong and healthy national feeling, but also as an instrument for keeping the government of Ireland in the hands of the Irish gentry. This idea, as I have already noticed, was the key-note of much of the policy of Grattan, and it may be traced with equal clearness in the speeches of

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the ablest of his contemporaries. They believed that Ireland from the unhappy circumstances of her history; from the conditions of her landed property; from the character of her people, and from the relations of her creeds and classes, is a country in which it is especially important that property and education should maintain an unbroken control over the currents of national life, and that if that control were relaxed she would inevitably drift into the worst type of Jacobinism. Their ideal was a resident, loyal, and independent Parliament, including the leading gentry of both creeds, and resting mainly on an electorate with a substantial property qualification. They believed that the Parliament of 1782 if reasonably and moderately reformed might be made such a Parliament, and that it would be the best instrument for assuaging the animosities of creed and class, and for leading the nation to a higher plane of moral and industrial civilisation. The Union in their eyes was especially calamitous as taking the government of Ireland out of the hands of its resident gentry, breaking down their authority, diminishing alike their influence over their people and their inducement to live in the country and to take a leading part in its concerns.

In the very remarkable protest against the Union signed by the dissentient Irish peers<sup>1</sup> this point of view is clearly disclosed. They argue that in times of danger and rebellion a loyal resident Parliament would be a quicker and more authoritative means of giving energy to the Executive than a Parliament in another country could ever be; that its removal tended to remove with it from the kingdom the men of large property and influence, of talents and respectability, whose

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<sup>1</sup> See *Grattan's Speeches*, iv. 34.

presence is at all times essential to its tranquillity, leaving room 'for political agitators and men of talents, without principle or property, to disturb and irritate the public mind.' Grattan seems to have foreseen a time when the representatives of Ireland would be almost wholly divorced from its property, education, and respectability, and would become a curse not only to the Empire but to Ireland. Lord Russell was accustomed to relate the humorous exaggeration with which at Holland House he expounded this view: 'You have swept away our Constitution; you have destroyed our Parliament, but we shall have our revenge. We will send into the ranks of your Parliament and into the heart of your Constitution a hundred of the greatest rascals in the kingdom.' In his great speech against the repeal of the Union in 1834, Spring Rice quoted what he said were among the last words of Grattan, that 'the people of his country should not look to a democratic government; they are not fit for it.'

Whether the ideal of Grattan could ever have been permanently maintained may well be doubted. It has long since vanished from the possibilities of politics, never to return; but few men will venture to say that his predictions were wholly falsified. There is probably no other country in Europe in which property, education, social influence, and all the higher forms of industrial and philanthropic enterprise are so little represented in political life as in Ireland, or in which the character of the people would be more grossly misjudged if it were judged mainly by their representatives in Parliament. Those are probably not wrong who believe that the worst result of the Union has been that it has dragged Ireland into a plane of democracy for which it is utterly and manifestly unfit.

That the Parliament which was swept away in 1800,

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and the political classes which it represented, were exceedingly corrupt cannot reasonably be questioned. The upper orders in Ireland were deeply tainted with the vices engendered by a long period of ascendancy and monopoly, and the manner in which the parliamentary government was conducted was well fitted to deepen their faults. In the Union struggle the overwhelming majority of the honest members were, I believe, on the side of the Opposition, but even on this side selfish local and personal interests played a considerable part. When, however, the undoubted venality of the Parliament is urged as an apology for the Union, an Irish writer may be permitted to remind his readers to whom that venality is to be ascribed—who resisted every serious effort of reform. The subservience of the Legislature to the Executive had been made a main object of the Government, and by many shameful means it was successfully accomplished. If, however, the spectacle presented by the majority in 1800 was eminently despicable, it should not be forgotten that in spite of all these means the House of Commons in the first year, when the Union was brought forward, was proof against temptation; that the measure was ultimately carried by introducing into the nomination boroughs new members, in some instances wholly unconnected with Ireland; and that, defective as the constitution of Parliament undoubtedly was, it is extremely questionable whether the Union could have been carried had there been a dissolution.

It must be added, too, that the corruption of the House of Commons was not so great as to prevent it on important occasions from yielding to the wishes of the people. The Irish House of Lords was a perfectly subservient body; the Irish House of Commons never was. In the early part of the eighteenth century the refrac-

*The Irish  
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tory element in it was chiefly due to the extreme dislike of the Irish landlords to tithes, while the English interest was for a long space of time directed by the primates of the Church. Archbishop Boulter complains bitterly of the opposition he had on this ground to encounter, and of the hostility of the Parliament to the Church.<sup>1</sup> At a later period the Octennial Bill was forced by public opinion on a very reluctant Parliament, and Parliament fully reflected the national enthusiasm in 1782. In Ireland, as in England, a certain proportion of the borough-owners were patriotic, and several of them came forward prominently in support of the Reform Bill of Flood.<sup>2</sup> The most tyrannical acts of the Irish Parliament may be fully matched by some of the proceedings of the English Parliaments under the Tudors, and though very corrupt if compared with the British Parliament at the end of the last century, and of course still more with that of our own day, it was probably not much more corrupt, and was certainly much more tolerant, than that which sat in London in the early years of the eighteenth century. No one has stigmatised the Irish Legislature in more vehement language than Lord Macaulay, but he could hardly apply to it stronger terms of condemnation than he applied to the English Parliament of Walpole, 'who governed by corruption, because in his time it was impossible to govern otherwise.' 'A large proportion of the members,' he tells us, 'had absolutely no motive to support any administration except their own interest, in the lowest sense of the word. Under these circumstances the country could be governed only by corruption. . . . We might as well accuse the poor Lowland farmers who paid blackmail to Rob Roy of corrupting the vir-

<sup>1</sup> See *Boulter's Letters*, ii. 154, 217, 234-236.

<sup>2</sup> *Grattan's Life*, iii. 123.

tue of the Highlanders, as accuse Sir R. Walpole of corrupting the virtue of Parliament !'

In estimating the character of a legislature, we should consider the period of its existence, the difficulties with which it had to contend, and the temptations to which it was exposed; and if these things be taken into account, the Irish Parliament will not be wholly condemned. Malone and Hutchinson, Flood and Grattan, Curran, Plunket, Foster, Parsons, Forbes and Burrowes were men who would have done honour to any Parliament. That a Legislature so defective in its constitution should have continued to exist is indeed wonderful, but it is far more wonderful that it should have achieved what it did, that it should have asserted its own independence, that it should have riven the chains that fettered its trade, that it should have removed the most serious disabilities under which the mass of the people laboured, that it should have voluntarily given up the monopoly of power it possessed, as representing the Protestants alone. With every inducement to religious bigotry, it carried in its latter days the policy of toleration in many respects farther than the Parliament of England. With many inducements to disloyalty, it was steadily faithful to the connection. And its reputation has suffered by its fidelity, for the invectives of the United Irishman Wolfe Tone have been reproduced by English writers as if they were the most impartial description of its merits.<sup>1</sup>

'I argue not,' said Grattan, 'like the minister, from the misconduct of one Parliament against the being of

<sup>1</sup> Thus, *e.g.* Macaulay, in his very fine speech 'on the state of Ireland,' having poured a multitude of fierce epithets on the Irish Parliament, concluded: 'I do not think that by saying this I have given offence to any gentleman from Ireland, however zealous for repeal he may be, for I *only* repeat the language of Wolfe Tone.'

Parliament itself. I value that parliamentary constitution by the average of its benefits, and I affirm that the blessings procured by the Irish Parliament in the last twenty years are greater than the blessings afforded by British Parliaments to Ireland for the last century, greater even than the mischiefs inflicted on Ireland by British Parliaments, greater than all the blessings procured by these Parliaments for their own country within that period. Within that time the Legislature of England lost an empire, and the Legislature of Ireland recovered a constitution.'

Nor should it be omitted that the Irish Parliament was on the whole a vigilant and intelligent guardian of the material interests of the country. During the greater part of the century, indeed, it had little power except that of protesting against laws crushing Irish commerce; but what little it could do it appears to have done. Its 'Journals' show a minute attention to industrial questions, to the improvement of means of communication, to the execution of public works. One of the most important events in English industrial history in the eighteenth century was the creation of a system of inland navigation by means of canals with locks, an improvement which is due to the genius of the engineer Brindley, and to the enterprise of the Duke of Bridgewater. The first canal in England of any magnitude was that between Worsley and Manchester, which was opened in 1761. The Irish Parliament appears to have immediately perceived its importance, and it undertook with great energy and alacrity to provide Ireland with a complete system of internal navigation. In 1761 it voted a sum of 13,500*l.* to the corporations of several inland navigations, and made special grants for a canal from Dublin to the Shannon, and for improving the navigation of the Shannon, Bar-

row, and Boyne. Two years later works of the most extensive kind appear to have been undertaken. Among the votes of the Irish House of Commons in 1763, we find grants for the construction of a canal between Dublin and the Shannon; for a canal from Newry to Lough Neagh; for a canal connecting Loch Swilly with Loch Foyle; for a canal which, together with improvements on the river Lagan, was intended to complete the navigation between Loch Neagh and the sea at Belfast; and for four other inland navigations by canals.<sup>1</sup>

There was no doubt much jobbing in public works and in other ways, but the taxation of Ireland was kept very low; there was little or no unfair pressure upon the poorer classes; the National Debt up to the time of the great French war was very moderate, and in the last years of the Irish Parliament, or at all events from the concession of free trade in 1779 to the rebellion of 1798, the material progress of Ireland was rapid and, except by one or two years of bad harvest, uninterrupted. In ten years from 1782 the exports trebled.<sup>2</sup> Lord Sheffield, who wrote upon Irish commerce in 1785, said, 'At present, perhaps, the improvement of Ireland is as rapid as any country ever experienced'; and Lord Clare, in his great speech in 1798, made a similar assertion with much greater emphasis. Speaking of the period that had elapsed since 1782, he said, 'There is not a nation in the habitable globe which has advanced in cultivation and commerce, in agriculture and manufactures, with the same rapidity in the same period.'

When the Union was passed, Grattan for a time retired from politics. His health had been for some time

<sup>1</sup> Macpherson's *Annals of Commerce*, iii. 349-383.

<sup>2</sup> See Grattan's Speech, May 18, 1810, vol. iv. p. 207.



unsatisfactory, and his spirits were greatly depressed by a defeat which he regarded as the destruction of the liberties of his country. He saw in it the overthrow of the entire labour of his life. For some time he could not bear to hear it discussed in conversation, and his eyes often filled with tears when speaking of it. But the people, who had been paralysed by the late rebellion, remained in a state of stupefied and sullen quiescence. Emmet's rebellion, which took place in 1803, cannot be regarded as in any degree the consequence of the Union. It was but the last wave of the rebellion of 1798, and originated in the overheated brain of an amiable and gifted, but most unpractical enthusiast. One great cause, however, still remained, and to the services of Catholics Grattan resolved to devote his remaining years.

He entered the British Parliament in 1805, and took his seat modestly on one of the back benches; but Fox, exclaiming, 'This is no place for the Irish Demosthenes!' drew him forward, and placed him near himself. Great doubts were felt about his success. The difference of the tone and habits of the two Parliaments, the advanced age of Grattan, the recent failure of Flood, and the cause Grattan had assigned for that failure,<sup>1</sup> suggested weighty reasons for fear. Much anxiety, therefore, and much curiosity, were felt when he rose to speak on that memorable night when the Catholic question was reopened. For a moment, it is said, the strangeness of his gestures, and the apparent difficulty of his enunciation, served to confirm those fears; but it was but for a moment. After almost the first passage he was listened to with an intense and ever-increasing admiration, and when he sat down it

<sup>1</sup> 'He was an oak of the forest too old and too great to be transplanted at fifty.'

Emmet's  
rebellion

was felt that he had more than justified his reputation. It was, indeed, one of his greatest speeches; a wonderful combination of reasoning, epigram, imagination, and declamation. Pitt, who made the first motion of applause, exclaimed, 'Burke told me that Grattan was a wonderful man for a popular audience, and I see that he was right.' Fox, in a private letter to Trotter, said, 'I am sure it will give you pleasure to hear that Grattan's success in the House of Commons was complete, and acknowledged even by those who had entertained great hopes of his failure.' The 'Annual Register' called the speech 'one of the most brilliant and eloquent ever pronounced within the walls of Parliament.' It was in the course of this speech that, in adverting to the first Catholic Relief Bill, he digressed into a eulogium of the Irish Parliament, and glanced at the services he had rendered to its freedom in a single sentence of touching and concentrated beauty: 'I watched by its cradle, I followed its hearse.'

The Union, making the public opinion of Great Britain the arbiter of the Catholic question, had entirely altered its conditions and, as it soon appeared, considerably increased its difficulties. There is reason to believe that in the first United Parliament a far larger proportion of the Irish than of the British representatives were favourable to Catholic concession. The disabilities of the Irish Catholics naturally did not appeal very strongly to English and Scotch members, for they were in reality considerably less than those of the British Catholics. The parliamentary suffrage had been granted on the widest terms to the Irish Catholics in 1793, but the English and Scotch Catholics only obtained the right to vote for members of Parliament in 1829. Dublin University had thrown open its degrees to Catholics, but from Oxford and Cambridge they

were rigidly excluded. In the army, Catholics in Ireland were allowed to rise to any rank up to and including that of colonel. In England Catholics could only be private soldiers, and were still by law excluded from all civil and military offices.

In 1805, Grenville in the House of Lords, and Fox in the House of Commons, brought the Catholic petition for emancipation forward for the first time in the Imperial Parliament, but they were totally defeated. The motion of Fox in the House of Commons found only 124 supporters, while 336 votes were given against it. Pitt both spoke and voted against it. He said that what was demanded could never have been safely given in an Irish Parliament; that he had believed, and did still believe, that the introduction of a certain proportion of Catholics into the Imperial Parliament under proper safeguards would bring with it no dangers, but that the circumstances that had led to the resignation of his own ministry made it improper to bring forward the question, and as long as these circumstances continued, he would never consent to a measure dealing with it. He added that in his opinion the prevailing sentiment among all classes and descriptions of Protestants outside the House was against Catholic Emancipation.

The death of Pitt in the January of 1806 brought Fox and Grenville into power, and no other English statesmen were more sincerely attached to the Catholic cause, but that cause gained nothing by their accession to office. Fox dissuaded the Catholics from taking any step on the ground that it could only injure their cause to bring it before Parliament. Grenville, after the death of Fox, without attempting to deal with the parliamentary representation, proposed to introduce a Bill which would have at least thrown open all military

and naval posts to the Catholics. The King, who at first appears to have consented, was speedily alarmed. A part of the Cabinet supported him. The Bill was dropped, and then the King took the high-handed and utterly unconstitutional step of requiring the ministers to give a formal written pledge that they would bring in no further measures of concession to the Catholics. On their refusal they were dismissed from office and the ministry of Perceval and Eldon was called to power. The general election that immediately followed took place on a 'No Popery' cry, and it ended in a great majority supporting the King and pledged to resist Catholic concessions.

Perhaps the most significant proof of how much the Catholic question had gone back, and how subsidiary a place it now held in the calculations of statesmen, is to be found in the fact that the avowedly anti-Catholic ministry of Perceval was nominally presided over by the old Duke of Portland, who from the antecedents of his Irish policy should have considered himself more than almost any other living man bound to see justice done to the Irish Catholics, and that two of its most important offices were held by such powerful and decided advocates of Catholic Emancipation as Castlereagh and Canning.

Public opinion had, indeed, about this period taken a direction strongly adverse to emancipation. The Tory reaction which followed the French Revolution was still in full force, and it was accompanied and strengthened by a religious movement which had been for some time fermenting in England, and which had greatly intensified the Protestant feeling among the people.

It will be sufficiently evident to anyone who follows the history of the two creeds that their separation had

reached its extreme limit when the Puritans were dominant in England, and Bossuet was ruling religious opinion in France. The Puritans represented Protestantism in its most exaggerated and undiluted form; while Bossuet, who exercised a greater influence over the lay mind than perhaps any theologian since Calvin, was maintaining the tenets of his Church with an almost unrivalled controversial skill. He was not, it is true, an Ultramontane, and he even entered into a correspondence with Leibnitz on the possibility of a compromise, but he asserted most emphatically the great distinctive principle of authority; he defined the points of difference with such a rigid accuracy that no evasion was possible; and in all his teaching he laid the greatest stress upon dogmas as distinguished from morals. After this period, for about a century, the two systems seemed rapidly approximating. If we compare the sermons of Massillon with those of Bossuet, we see the change in its commencement; if we compare the sermons of Blair or of Kirwan with those of the early Anglican divines, we see it in its completion. Dogma had formerly held the first place in the teaching of the pulpit, but it now in its turn gave way. The Christian preacher became at last little more than an expounder of morals. A well-regulated disposition, a virtuous life, and an active benevolence were represented as almost a summary of Christianity. The Bible was regarded as a repository of noble maxims and of instructive examples. The triumph of religion would be merely the perfection of order and philanthropy, the apotheosis and the completion of government.

This tendency may be in part ascribed to the natural reaction and fatigue that followed the fierce controversies of the preceding century; and it was also in a great measure due to the prevalence of scepticism in

both Churches. In England sceptical opinions had been maintained openly by Bolingbroke and Gibbon and Hume; and if English light literature at the close of the last century was not Voltairian in its spirit, it was probably owing in a great measure to the extraordinary influence of Dr. Johnson. In France no such restraint existed. Voltaire and Rousseau towered far above their contemporaries, and never disguised their sentiments. The sarcasms of Voltaire turned the whole stream of ridicule and wit against the Church; while the burning eloquence, the impassioned earnestness of Rousseau fell with terrific effect on its tottering system.

The University of Paris issued an answer to the 'Vicar of Savoy,' but it is now almost forgotten. All the real talent of the country seemed ranged against the Established faith, and its defenders were compelled to adopt an apologetical and an evasive tone. It was quite true that all infants who died unbaptised were excluded from heaven, but then hell was an indefinite expression, and comprised a variety of conditions, and St. Augustine was not prepared to say that it would be better for those children had they never been born. Purgatory was undoubtedly a Catholic doctrine, but it was not necessarily the place of torment by fire which was portrayed in the pictures in every church. The priests who celebrated royal marriages in Spain by an *auto de fe*, the Pope who struck medals in commemoration of the Massacre of St. Bartholomew, the persecutors of Galileo, the legal or ecclesiastical decisions which consigned tens of thousands of Jews and heretics and alleged witches to the stake, and crushed for generations every vestige of independent thought were no true representatives of the spirit of the Church. The doctrine of invincible ignorance was brought prominently forward. The doctrine of infallibility was in-

terpreted in its broadest sense, and the attribute was applied not to an individual, but to the whole Church. Above all, the purity of the moral teaching of Christianity was asserted and displayed, while its special doctrines were allowed to fall into the background.

In this manner the two religions gradually assimilated in a common morality when the tide again turned, and a violent revulsion set in. In Roman Catholic countries Ultramontanism became dominant after the Revolution, but it purchased its triumph dearly. The priests taught the most extreme Roman Catholic doctrines, while the educated laity remained disciples of Montaigne, if not of Voltaire. In England the Methodists had begun their labours; and, after many years of comparatively unnoticed preachings among the poor, their principles began to leaven the higher ranks, and to embody themselves in the great Evangelical party.

The Ultramontane and the Evangelical movements completely altered the attitude of the two religions both towards scepticism and towards each other. Voltaire had maintained in France that the doctrines of the Church were contrary to reason and to the moral sense; and Ultramontanism answered that these were absolutely incompetent to judge them. Bolingbroke had argued in England that the moral teaching of Christianity existed in the works of the pagan philosophers; and the Evangelical replied that a moral system had no efficacy as a means of salvation, and was only enforced in the New Testament as a secondary and subordinate object. The two sections of Christianity had been approximating, on the ground of common duties; and the Evangelical taught that no man could perform duties acceptable to God, and that the whole scope and purport of Christianity was to teach a doctrine of justification which the Church of Rome refused to admit.

Against this Church, then, as the most powerful, the most subtle, and the most specious opponent of truth, all the energies of the Evangelicals were directed. They traced its lineaments in every intimation of coming apostacy contained in the prophetic writings. They recognised it as the horn of Daniel 'speaking proud things,' as the mystic Babylon red with the blood of the saints, as the Man of Sin who was to be revealed when the Roman Empire was removed, as the spirit of antichrist that was to seduce and to triumph in the latter days. They revived the histories of bygone persecutions that transcended the worst efforts of paganism, and laboured with the same untiring assiduity in the pulpit and on the hustings, in the religious tale and the newspaper article, to repress the progress of the Church they feared. As early as 1780, John Wesley himself had written letters publicly denouncing the toleration of Popery. During the general election of 1807 the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge published a Resolution denouncing the Bill for the admission of Catholics into the higher ranks of the army.<sup>1</sup>

The Evangelical movement was somewhat slow in spreading to Ireland, and during the greater part of the eighteenth century, as I have already said, the theological temperature was very tepid. In 1745, it is true, under the fear of an impending invasion, a kind of panic of intolerance passed through the country, and some of the clergy are said to have been active in denouncing the Catholics, but for the most part they appear to have been a very unaggressive class, who discharged social and philanthropic functions of unquestionable utility, meddled little with dogmatic theology, and seldom interfered with their Catholic neighbours.

<sup>1</sup> See the remarkable letter of Lord Grenville on this Resolution. Plowden's *History of Ireland from the Union*, iii. 549-553.



The tithe riots of the eighteenth century had little or no connection with religious animosity, and the Protestant landlords were almost as hostile to the tithes as their tenants. In 1725, when the penal laws were at their height, a Protestant clergyman named Synge, in a remarkable sermon preached before the Irish House of Commons, and published by its order, urged the duty of granting perfect toleration to the Catholics. Ten years later the illustrious Bishop Berkeley, in his 'Querist,' advocated their admission into Dublin University, and their exemption from the obligation of attending chapel or divinity lectures. Lord Bristol, the famous Bishop of Derry, was one of the most uncompromising supporters of the Catholic claims. He was, no doubt, not a man who could be taken as a fair specimen of his order, but the great Relief Bill of 1793, which gave the Catholics the suffrage, was warmly supported by several bishops, and acquiesced in by the majority of the clergy; and it produced nothing of the alarm and indignation which, both among the English and Irish clergy, was aroused by the much less important measure of 1829.<sup>1</sup>

Dublin University has usually been looked upon as a stronghold of Irish Protestantism, but, as we have seen, it had long preceded the English Universities in throwing open its degrees to Catholics, and for many years after the Union, and at a time when its electorate

<sup>1</sup> A contemporary Irish historian thus describes the attitude of the clergy on this occasion: 'What a picture of liberality and moderation did the conduct of the Established clergy of Ireland exhibit during the recent application for Catholic Emancipation! Many pious and learned prelates ex-

erted their eloquence in Parliament in support of Catholicity; and the entire body of the Protestant clergy, in their conduct on this occasion, have fully approved themselves the disciples of the meek, mild, and gentle Author of Christianity.' Mullalla's *Irish Affairs* (1795), ii. 260.

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was purely academical, it was represented in Parliament by advocates of Catholic Emancipation. Plunket himself, the illustrious leader of the cause, represented Dublin University from 1812 to 1827, and although Wilson Croker, who held the seat from 1827 to 1831, was in some respects a strong Tory, he was also, both by his pen and by his voice, during his whole life a steady advocate of the admission of Catholics into Parliament and of the payment of their priests. In 1807, when the anti-Popery spirit in England ran very high, the Duke of Cumberland, who was Chancellor of Dublin University, vainly tried to obtain an address from it against Grenville's Catholic Bill.<sup>1</sup> In that year Sir John Newport mentioned in Parliament that the number of Catholic students there was twice as numerous as it had ever before been.<sup>2</sup>

There does not, indeed, appear to have been any sign that the No-Popery movement which was at this time so overwhelming in England was seriously felt in Ireland. In the election of 1807, Grattan speaks of 'the strong disposition to concord and peace' shown by the members of both creeds at the Irish elections.<sup>3</sup> Nine Irish counties forwarded petitions from the Protestant inhabitants in favour of the Catholic claims; more than a hundred of the principal landlords in Ireland including a large proportion of the Irish aristocracy published a 'Protestant Declaration' in the same sense, and in 1808 Ponsonby read in the House of Commons a letter from Plunket describing opinions in Ireland, in which he stated his belief that 'nine in ten

<sup>1</sup> *Grattan's Speeches*, iv. 106, 115. This matter was brought before Parliament by Plunket in his first speech. Plowden, ii. 508.

<sup>2</sup> See Plowden's *History*, ii. 453.

<sup>3</sup> *Grattan's Speeches*, iv. 115.

Protestants, even including the clergy, would poll for Catholic Emancipation.'<sup>1</sup>

It would be, I conceive, a mistake to attribute the tolerance of the Irish Protestants towards the close of the eighteenth century to the prevalence of conscious scepticism. Avowed and reasoned free thought has never been common in Ireland,<sup>2</sup> and the Irish literature towards the end of the last century and the beginning of the present is full of the usual denunciations of scepticism, and the usual depreciation of sceptical writers.<sup>3</sup> At the same time the type of prevailing Protestantism, like that of the prevailing Catholicism, was singularly colourless and undogmatic. I have already quoted some sentences from the speeches of Grattan describing the gradual assimilation of the two creeds,

<sup>1</sup> *Grattan's Life*, v. 378. See, too, *Fagan's Life of O'Connell*, i. 66.

<sup>2</sup> Primate Boulter complained bitterly of 'the growth of atheism, profanity, and immorality' in Ireland, but it seems to have shown itself chiefly in resistance to tithes. Toland was an Irishman, but lived in England, and when he went to Ireland he was denounced from the pulpit, and such an outcry was raised that it became dangerous to speak to him, and he could hardly procure the necessities of life. He appears, however, to have been guilty of much imprudence in propagating his views. Parliament ordered his *Christianity not Mysterious* to be burnt, and the author to be arrested, and he only escaped by precipitate flight. Molyneux has described the trans-

action in a letter to Locke (September 11, 1697), and South wrote in great glee to the Archbishop of Dublin: 'Your Parliament presently sent him packing, and without the help of a faggot soon made the Kingdom too hot for him.'—Disraeli's *Calamities of Authors*, ii. 133.

<sup>3</sup> *E.g.* 'The writings of Hume and Gibbon, which have been directly or indirectly levelled against the Christian religion, have long since sunk into merited oblivion.'—Mullalla's *View of Irish Affairs from the Revolution* (1795), ii. 280. 'Surely a Voltaire, a Rousseau, or a Gibbon were as inferior to Colin Maclaurin in mental power as they were in bodily strength to Hercules or Samson.'—Ryan's *History of the Effects of Religion* (1802), 421.

and no one appears to have been scandalised by the somewhat startling summary of ecclesiastical history which the same speaker threw out in one of his greatest orations: 'The only Divine institution we know of—the Christian religion—did so corrupt as to have become an abomination, and was rescued by Act of Parliament.' In an age when sectarian controversy has obtained a great empire over the minds of men, it seldom fails to reflect itself in the speculations on unfulfilled prophecy; but, as we have already seen, Dobbs, who was the most enthusiastic Irish labourer in this field, was a warm advocate of the Catholic claims. By far the most eminent preacher in the Protestant Church at the end of the last century was Dean Kirwan, who, if estimated by the power he exercised over the feelings of his auditors, by the beneficence he evoked, and by the judgments of his contemporaries, at a time when the standard of eloquence was extremely high, must be placed as a pulpit orator almost on a level with Whitefield. This very remarkable man had been originally a Catholic, and one of the reasons he alleged for joining the Established Church was, that he should thus obtain more extensive opportunities of doing good. He rigidly abstained in all his sermons from every topic relating to the differences between the two Churches, making it, as he said, his main object 'to banish religious prejudices, to diffuse through society the great blessings of peace, order, and mutual affection, and to represent Christianity as a practical institution of religion designed to regulate the dispositions and improve the characters of men,' and he at last devoted his talents entirely to pleading the cause of charitable institutions.

A society could not have been very bigoted or fanatical when its most popular preacher adopted such a tone. Kirwan, though a man of spotless reputation and splen-

did genius, never obtained any more lucrative preferment than a deanery of 400*l.* a year, and was able to leave no fortune to his children; but something of his spirit was shown among his more fortunate brethren. Law, the Bishop of Elphin, was accustomed to distribute among his Catholic parishioners the best books of their own authors, saying that, as he could not make them good Protestants, he at least wished them to be good Roman Catholics.

I have dwelt at some length upon these facts, for they are not much known in England, and they have a considerable importance in the history of public opinion in Ireland. And, indeed, the amount of intolerance that formerly existed in both religions in that country has been not a little exaggerated; for atrocities which were really due to land quarrels or to hostility of races have been ascribed to the conflicts of their religions.

The Irish have not generally been an intolerant or persecuting people. The early history of the introduction of Christianity into Ireland, though not, as has been said, absolutely bloodless,<sup>1</sup> was at least unusually pacific, and it was an old reproach against Irishmen that their country, which had produced innumerable saints, had produced no martyr. During the persecutions of Mary the English Protestants among them were perfectly unmolested, and even in the midst of the savage scenes of plunder and massacre that accompanied the rebellion of 1641 it is very remarkable that the one Englishman of eminence who was treated by the rebels with reverence was Bedell, who was one of the most energetic Protestants of his age, and the first Irish bishop who attempted to proselytise among the

<sup>1</sup> There is a discussion on this point in Todd's *Life of St. Patrick*.

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Catholics. Though more superstitious than the English, and perhaps than the Scotch, their superstitions have usually taken a milder form. Many hundreds of unhappy women have perished on the charge of witchcraft both in England and Scotland since the Reformation, but I know no evidence of any persecution of witches in Ireland at all comparable to that in England under James I. and the Puritans, or in Scotland during a great part of the seventeenth century.<sup>1</sup> Whatever animosity the penal laws produced had in a great measure subsided towards the end of the eighteenth century, and it would be difficult to find in any country more moderate or liberal members of their respective faiths than Kirwan, the greatest preacher among the Irish Protestants, and O'Leary, the greatest writer among the Irish Catholics.

The elements of religious animosity, however, though they were almost dormant, existed in abundance, and several causes concurred, with the rise of the Evangelical movement, in resuscitating them. The many outbursts of lawless violence that convulsed the country from the middle of the century had been for a long time almost entirely unconnected with religion. Rack-rents, the fiscal pressure of tithes, invasions of common lands by the landlords, the conversion of arable land into pasture, the law which compelled workmen to devote a certain amount of unpaid labour to repairing the county roads, were the causes or pretexts of the appear-

<sup>1</sup> A famous Irish witch case—that of Dame Alice Kyteler, in 1324—has been reprinted by the Camden Society, and a few unimportant later ones are given by Glanvil in his *Sadducismus Triumphatus*. Hutchinson, Wright, and Madden

appear to have found no other Irish cases. It is much to be wished that some Irish archæological society would investigate more fully than (as far as I am aware) has yet been done the history of Irish witchcraft.

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ance of the Whiteboys, the Oakboys, and the Hearts of Steel. About 1785, however, a new type of disturbance began. Protestants in the county Armagh, and afterwards in other districts, began to form bands under the name of Peep of Day Boys, and to disarm and persecute the Catholics, who in their turn formed societies called 'Defenders,' which were said to have been, and perhaps were at first defensive, but which soon turned into bands of mere depredators. A faction fight unconnected with religion is said to have been at the beginning of the long contest and Whiteboy objects, and struggles for farms certainly entered into it, but the division was sharply one between Protestants and Catholics, and it assumed much of the character of a religious war.

The Relief Act of 1793, conferring votes upon the Catholics, produced some economical disturbance. Landlords who had once a special reason for favouring Protestant tenants on account of the political influence they could give, now freely admitted the competition of Catholics, and Catholics who were accustomed to a lower standard of living offered higher rents for the farms. The passions aroused by the recall of Lord Fitzwilliam intensified all forms of religious division. Several of the northern counties were convulsed with riot, and in the county of Armagh, where the Protestants were in the ascendant, hundreds of Catholics were compelled by violence to abandon their homes and take refuge in Connaught. In the December of 1795 the battle of the Diamond took place, in which the Protestants defeated a large body of Catholics who had attacked them, and in which forty-eight men were killed, and it was for some time sedulously commemorated.

The Orange Society was founded immediately after the battle of the Diamond. It would be unjust to make it responsible for the riots in the north, though

many of the rioters took the name of Orange Boys, but it consolidated and strengthened the extreme supporters of Protestant ascendancy, and it played a great part in later Irish history. As the rebellion became imminent sectarian feeling increased, and all who tried to allay it were looked upon with suspicion. Though the original United Irishmen had been chiefly Protestants or Deists, and though their object was to unite the members of both creeds on French principles in rebellion against England, the outbreak in Wexford, where alone it was formidable, at once assumed the form of a ferocious religious war. In the Irish Government Lord Clare was fiercely anti-Catholic, and similar sentiments were energetically maintained in the Irish and afterwards in the British House of Commons by the notorious Dr. Duigenan.

This very singular personage is said to have been himself originally a Roman Catholic. He was a man of low extraction, but of some talents, and had been a Fellow of Trinity College, where he wrote a book against the provost, Hely Hutchinson. He obtained a seat in the Irish House of Commons, laboured without success to procure the cessation of the Maynooth grant, attached himself specially to the fortunes of Clare, and was a very scurrilous assailant of Grattan and of Burke. He warmly supported the Union, and in the Imperial Parliament he was the most vituperative and indefatigable opponent of the Catholic claims. He was especially fond of exhuming the immoral sentiments of the schoolmen, the Jesuit casuists, and the mediæval councils, and parading them continually before the Parliament and before the country.<sup>1</sup> Curran wittily compared his

<sup>1</sup> It is curious that he was married to a Roman Catholic; he proposed to her and was re-

fused when young, but was accepted many years after, when she was a widow.



speeches to the 'unrolling of a mummy—nothing but old bones and rotten rags.' Against the introduction of this mode of controversy into politics Grattan energetically protested. 'No religion,' he said in one of his speeches, 'can stand if men, without regard to their God, and with regard only to controversy, shall rake out of the rubbish of antiquity the obsolete and quaint follies of the sectarians, and affront the majesty of the Almighty with the impudent catalogue of their devices; and it is a strong argument against the proscriptive system that it helps to continue this shocking contest; theologian against theologian, polemic against polemic, until the two madmen defame their common parent, and expose their common religion.'

As is always the case, the destruction of national feeling in Ireland gave an increased prominence to sectarian controversy, and gradually turned the energies of the country into that channel. The Roman Catholics, who had been so passive during the Union struggle, were bitterly discontented with the effect of the Union upon their cause, and complained that they were abandoned and betrayed. The Evangelical movement was spreading on both sides of the Channel, though some years had still to pass before it became dominant or even powerful among the Irish Protestant clergy. It brought with it a higher standard of clerical duty and a strain of more fervent and spiritual piety, but in Ireland even more than in England it not unnaturally assumed an aggressively anti-popery character, and the passions of the rebellion had not yet subsided. The moderate Liberals generally followed Grattan, and comprised a large section of the Protestants and almost all the higher orders of Roman Catholics; but a party was arising among the Irish Catholics which was very democratic and which became very clerical, and it soon

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found in O'Connell a leader of commanding power. It professed to revere Grattan but it was not in reality in sympathy with his politics, and it soon added greatly to the difficulty of his position.

He determined to keep himself entirely independent. He refused office in Fox's Ministry, which came in in 1806, and which restored him to the Privy Council from which he had been removed in 1798; and he refused to accept 4,000*l.* which the Roman Catholics subscribed in the same year to defray the expenses of his election for Dublin.

The ministry of Fox and Grenville was more liberally disposed towards Ireland than any ministry that had sat in England since the Union, and Grattan was in close correspondence with its leaders and with the Duke of Bedford, who was Viceroy in Ireland. Among the Irish measures carried in 1807 was an increase of the Maynooth grant from 8,000*l.* to 13,000*l.* a year, and Grattan powerfully supported it, though admitting that if it had been possible he would have preferred to see the education of the priesthood carried on in Dublin University, 'for he would ever wish to see the Catholic and Protestant walking hand in hand together.'<sup>1</sup> Two other measures were contemplated by this ministry in which Grattan took especial interest. It established a commission to inquire into Irish education funds with a view to founding a general system of national education, and it proposed to abolish tithes and substitute for them another method of paying the Irish Protestant clergy. It would be difficult to overrate the importance of these measures, and it was a great calamity that the downfall of the Grenville Ministry postponed them for many years.

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<sup>1</sup> See *Grattan's Speeches*, iv. 97-99. The grant was again reduced to 8,000*l.* by the succeeding administration.

Grattan has been blamed, perhaps with some reason, for not having formally identified himself with this ministry, but the pressure of years was now falling upon him, and his old dislike to the trammels of office had certainly not diminished. He desired also to take no step that would bring him into opposition to the supporters of the Catholics in other sections of English politics. This policy he had long and deliberately adopted. 'I have always,' he wrote, 'considered the Catholic question abstracted from any party or administration. Lord Hutchinson and our old friend Mr. Forbes were from the first agreed on the subject.'<sup>1</sup> In 1807 he showed in a remarkable degree his independence of judgment by supporting in the face of much Irish unpopularity a very stringent Insurrection Bill and a Bill for preventing improper persons from keeping arms, which were modelled from some of the legislation of the Irish Parliament. These measures had been contemplated by the Grenville Ministry, but they were actually introduced after its fall by Sir Arthur Wellesley, who was now Secretary for Ireland. Grattan supported motions for limiting their duration and in some respects mitigating their severity, but he maintained that the disturbances in the west of Ireland, and especially the existence and growing strength in Ireland of a party devoted to France, rendered such legislation absolutely necessary. Some of his warmest Whig friends and admirers, including Romilly and Horner, strongly dissented from his course,<sup>2</sup> and Sheridan led an opposition to the Bills; but Grattan always maintained that a French and disloyal party existed in Ireland, which in the event of an invasion would become very formidable, and that it was no true kindness to

<sup>1</sup> *Grattan's Life*, v. 368.

<sup>2</sup> See *Romilly's Life*, ii. 214.

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withhold from the Executive any powers that were necessary for repressing it.<sup>1</sup>

The correspondence of Sir Arthur Wellesley at this time furnishes abundant evidence how serious in the judgment of that cool and sagacious Chief Secretary the state of Ireland then was. In a memorable despatch, written to Lord Hawkesbury in the May of 1807, he declared that Ireland, in a military point, must be regarded as an enemy's country; that it was vulnerable on every part of its southern, western, and northern coasts, and that if a body of French sufficient to give employment to a large proportion of the regular troops were landed, there was not the least doubt that not only Dublin and the adjoining counties, but also every other part of Ireland would at once rise in rebellion.<sup>2</sup>

In 1808 the veto question which long distracted Irish politics arose, and it gave a substance and a rallying cry to the more democratic section which had been for some years growing among the Irish Catholics. In 1799, as we have already seen, the four archbishops and six senior bishops of Ireland assembled at Maynooth, speaking, as Dr. Milner himself afterwards acknowledged, 'in the name of the whole episcopal body,' had unanimously agreed, subject only to the approval of the Pope, that the English Government should have a veto over the appointment of Catholic bishops and some control over the nomination of parish priests.<sup>3</sup> Con-

<sup>1</sup> *Grattan's Speeches*, iv. 120-133. He said he hoped to secure to Ireland a 'reversionary interest in the Constitution.' He adopted a similar course in 1814. The perfect courage with which Grattan always risked his popularity for what he thought the in-

terest of his country is one of the finest traits of his character.

<sup>2</sup> *Civil Correspondence of the Duke of Wellington (Ireland)*, pp. 28-36.

<sup>3</sup> See Butler's *Memoirs of the English Catholics*, ii. 151, 152, 185.

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sidering the class from which the Irish priesthood mainly sprang; the enormous power they were certain to exercise over an ignorant, superstitious, lawless, and often disloyal people; their strong temptations to win power and popularity by fostering the prejudices and passions, and condoning the crimes of those upon whom they depended for their subsistence, it was plainly in the highest degree desirable that the Government should have some controlling influence over the Catholic Church in Ireland. There was scarcely a country in the world in which the necessity of such State control was not recognised. In Protestant Prussia and schismatical Russia all Catholic bishops were appointed on the recommendation of the sovereign. In Canada the King of England, with the full assent of Rome, had a similar power, while all the great Roman Catholic countries had elaborate legislation restricting the relations of the clergy with Rome, and guarding against abuses of ecclesiastical power.

If the policy of Pitt had been carried out after the Union, the State endowment of the Catholic priesthood combined with the safeguards I have mentioned would have at least given the Government some guarantee that the Irish Catholic Church should not fall under the direction of ecclesiastical firebrands, and that it would be an influence of order and of loyalty. There is not the smallest doubt that a measure on these lines would have then been gratefully accepted by the whole body of the Irish bishops and have received the full sanction of the Vatican. The Catholic Church in England was governed by four vicars-general, and in 1807 one of them—the well-known Dr. Milner—was appointed agent in England for the Irish bishops. He accepted the office with the full belief that they were unanimously in favour of the veto. In 1808, when it

was determined again to introduce the Catholic question, Ponsonby, who with Grattan took the leading part on this question, had an interview with Milner in the presence of Lord Fingall, and asked him what power the Irish bishops were disposed to attribute to his Majesty in the choice of Catholic bishops. Milner replied that they could not attribute to the King a positive power of choosing their bishops, but that they were willing to give a direct negative power over their nomination, so that no bishop could be chosen who was not agreeable to him. On the strength of this assurance Grattan and Ponsonby in the House of Commons and Grenville in the House of Lords formally announced that they were authorised on the part of the Irish bishops to offer to the King 'an effectual negative' over the future nomination of their bishops; an assurance that no bishop should in future be appointed without his entire approbation.

There is no doubt that they were perfectly justified in making these statements, though Ponsonby in the course of his speech, when dilating upon the value of the concession, used an unfortunate and exaggerated phrase, to the effect that by conceding the veto 'the Catholic bishops had no objection to make the King virtually the head of their Church.' The party, however, in Ireland which had long wished to break off from the timid and conciliatory course which had hitherto been pursued by the directors of Irish Catholic policy, now saw their opportunity, and raised an agitation against the concession to the English Government of any power over the appointment of Catholic bishops.

For some months it appears to have been confined to the press, and there were no signs that the bishops were receding from the position they had taken up in 1799. Lord Fingall fully attested the accuracy of the

statement made by Ponsonby in the House of the assurance given by Dr. Milner, and although the inference he had drawn from it in the sentence I have quoted was in some quarters disavowed, Ponsonby received letters from two Irish bishops thanking him for his speech. One of these, which he read to the House, and which came from an archbishop, is stated by the reporters of the debate to have expressed 'the most unqualified approbation of the arguments and observations' he had used. Dr. Milner disclaimed, it is true, any responsibility for the statement of Ponsonby that the King might be regarded as the head of the Irish Catholic Church, but he wrote and printed a pamphlet called a 'Letter to a Parish Priest,' defending the veto against the attacks which had been made upon it in Ireland, speaking of the resolutions of 1799 as the authoritative voice of the whole Irish episcopate, and exposing the absurdity of imagining that there was anything in them inconsistent with the principles of the Catholic Church. 'In almost every un-Catholic country,' he said, 'care is taken both by those who have a right to present, and by the Holy See itself, that no person obnoxious to the Sovereign shall be raised to the prelacy within his dominions,' and referring to the recent French Concordat he said, 'the Head of the Church has allowed a direct interference and power in the appointment of bishops throughout the greater part of the Christian Continent to a man who has apostatised to Mahometanism; and shall it be deemed unlawful for our Monarch to interfere in this business, just so far as is necessary to ascertain the loyalty of men who are to possess such great influence over his subjects?'

The new democratic party in Ireland which was already supported by the great voice of O'Connell ob-

tained a signal triumph. In September 1808, about four months after Grattan had introduced the Catholic question into the Imperial Parliament, and had gained many supporters by announcing the willingness of Irish bishops to accept the veto, those bishops, with only three dissentient voices, agreed to a resolution declaring it to be inexpedient to introduce any alteration in the canonical mode hitherto observed in the nomination of the Irish Catholic bishops, pledging themselves at the same time to adhere to the rules by which they had been uniformly guided, and to recommend to his Holiness only such persons 'as are of unimpeachable loyalty and peaceable conduct.'

This step had a powerful and immediate effect in stimulating the democratic movement in Ireland and at the same time profoundly dividing the Catholic interests. Its popularity was abundantly shown. Meetings, resolutions, addresses supporting the bishops poured in from every part of Ireland, and the doctrine that the English Government should have no control over the Irish Church became the watchword of a great party. Milner speedily recanted his letter in favour of the veto and threw himself into the popular movement. It became the fashion to say that the bishops who accepted the veto in 1799, being only a minority of the episcopate, had no right to speak for their colleagues; that they had acted under intimidation; that the majority of the Irish bishops had never even heard of what they had done; that Milner in his interview with Ponsonby had gone beyond his powers; had spoken only his private opinion; had not authorised Ponsonby to repeat his opinion in the House of Commons; had only contemplated the exercise of the veto in extreme cases of clearly proved disloyalty.

These excuses may be lightly dismissed. It was



wholly untrue that the bishops in 1799 had been subject to the smallest intimidation by the Government; it was absurd to contend that the unanimous declaration of the four archbishops and six senior bishops given in reply to an official Government request had no representative character, and it was exceedingly improbable that the negotiations had not been at least informally communicated to their colleagues. The assurance of Milner had been perfectly distinct, and it had been given by him as the agent of the Irish bishops to the parliamentary leaders who had the special charge of the Catholic question, and who, as he well knew, were just about to bring it before Parliament.

The inconsistency was flagrant, but it was at least easily explained. The bishops in 1799 had passed their resolutions in the belief that by doing so they would secure Catholic Emancipation and an endowment as the immediate results of the Union. They found themselves disappointed in their expectations. They perceived that their emancipation had receded rather than advanced; that English opinion was much more hostile to it than opinion in Ireland. When they saw that the Catholic question was rejected by overwhelming majorities in both Houses of Parliament, and that the advice of some of their chief leaders in London was that they should abstain from pressing the question; when they found a No-popery administration supported by a recent general election in power, and some of their own most important advocates accepting office in it, it was scarcely surprising that a spirit of violent exasperation should have arisen; that they should have readily listened to those who told them that a new and more aggressive and more unyielding policy could alone succeed.

Opinions, however, were very sharply divided. As

far as can be now judged the whole body of the Catholic gentry, including not only the aristocracy but also the leading members of the mercantile and legal professions, disliked the new departure and cordially accepted the veto. The English Catholics were on the same side, and of the four English vicars apostolic Milner alone supported the new demand. The disposition of Rome was also decidedly in favour of accepting the terms which Pitt and Castlereagh deemed indispensable, and during the whole of the veto contest one of the great difficulties O'Connell and the Irish bishops had to encounter was the attitude of Gonsalvi and the leading officials at Rome. Grattan and Plunket appear to have entirely agreed with Canning and Castlereagh on the subject. They believed that Catholic Emancipation could only be carried if the Catholics adopted a conciliatory course and accepted real safeguards of the loyalty of their bishops. Pitt, Castlereagh and Canning all maintained that without some State control Catholic Emancipation should not be granted, and Grattan and Plunket both considered their demand to be reasonable. They were sincere and steady advocates of full religious liberty and of the admission of Catholics to political power. But they had no wish to see the Irish Catholic Church detached from all connection with the State or turned into an instrument of agitation, and they looked with great disfavour on the new spirit that was arising within it. On the other hand the Irish bishops, strong in the consciousness of popular support, were determined to persevere, and in 1810 they passed new resolutions reiterating their dislike to any change in the practice hitherto employed in the appointment of Irish Roman Catholic prelates, and, what was still more significant, disclaiming all wish for a State endowment for their clergy. 'We neither seek

nor desire any other earthly consideration for our spiritual ministry to our respective flocks, save what they may from a sense of religion and duty voluntarily afford us.'<sup>1</sup>

The triumph of the new party and policy belongs to the life of O'Connell, not to that of Grattan, but in more ways than one the division that had arisen proved very mischievous. It seriously threw back the Catholic cause. The spirit of violence it infused into Catholic policy produced a corresponding feeling of exasperation and alarm among many Protestants, and the ultimate settlement was certainly not conducive to the peace and loyalty of Ireland. Irish history is pre-eminently a history of lost opportunities, and few things in it are more to be deplored than that the Catholic question was not settled on the lines which Pitt had desired in the few quiet years that followed the Union.

Grattan maintained his old position with unabating perseverance, but he made no secret of the fact that he had not the old unanimity of Catholic support behind him. In bringing the question forward in 1810 he said that when he had last addressed the House on the question 'he had stated that the Catholics were willing to accede to his Majesty the right of veto on the Catholic nomination of their bishops. He was sorry to say that he could not now affirm that such were the sentiments of the Roman Catholics of Ireland upon that subject. Whether he had misinformed the House or the Catholics had been guilty of retractation was a question he should never agitate, it being his fixed principle never to defend himself at the expense of the country. He

<sup>1</sup> See Wyse. *History of the Catholic Association*, ii. p. xx. All the more important documents relating to this contro-

versy will be found in Butler's *History of the English Catholics*, and in Amherst's *History of Catholic Emancipation*.

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contended that the triumphs of Napoleon having made the Pope little more than a French subject, made it more than ever essential to guard against the nomination of the spiritual magistrates of so great a portion of the community falling under the control of the common enemy, or their influence being used against the British Constitution. If, he said, the Catholics objected to the veto 'it was absolutely incumbent upon them to provide by some other mode to show that admitting them to the privileges of the Constitution was wholly consistent with its safety.' He urged, however, that questions of qualifications, limitations and securities were questions to be examined in the Committee stage and not upon the second reading, but his motion for a committee was rejected by a majority of 104.

In the two following years he was defeated by majorities of 63, 94, and 85, but after a new ministry had been called to office in 1812, Canning carried by a majority of 129 a resolution pledging the House to take the laws affecting the Catholics into consideration early the following session, with a view to effecting a final and conciliatory adjustment. In accordance with this resolution, Grattan, seconded by Ponsonby, introduced in 1813 a large measure of Catholic Emancipation, admitting the Catholics not only to Parliament, but also with a very few specified exceptions to all civil and military posts, and it passed triumphantly through several divisions. Canning, however, introduced in the Committee stage clauses appointing commissioners for the purpose of securing the loyalty of the persons nominated to the Catholic episcopacy, making their certificate necessary for the exercise of episcopal functions in the United Kingdom, and enabling them to refuse this certificate when they had reason to believe that the proposed bishop was disaffected to the King or not of

peaceable conduct. Commissioners also, consisting of some of the principal persons of the realm with the addition of three leading members of the Catholic episcopacy, were authorised to examine papal bulls and briefs sent to the United Kingdom for the purpose of ascertaining that they related solely to spiritual concerns, and contained nothing affecting the duty and allegiance of subjects to the King or the civil rights and properties of his subjects. This provision was proposed as a substitute for the old laws prohibiting all intercourse between the subjects of the realm and the see of Rome, and the commissioners were bound by oath to disclose nothing contained in the confidential documents from Rome except only such matters and things as the oath and duty of a privy councillor bound them to reveal.<sup>1</sup>

These securities, as I have said, were not introduced into the Catholic Bill by Grattan, but he expressed his full approval of them, and he warned the Catholic bishops in very solemn terms that if they declared themselves hostile to them they would wreck the Bill, and 'that upon their own heads and on their heads alone can the consequences of their own folly rest.'<sup>2</sup>

The appeal, however, was made in vain. Milner, as the agent of the Irish bishops, lost no time in denouncing the measure as a 'schismatical Bill,' and it is probably due to the known hostility of his party that it did not become law. The clause admitting the Catholics to Parliament was rejected by the small majority of four, and the Catholic leaders at once threw up the Bill. Scenes of much division and recrimination afterwards took place in the Catholic body. In England

<sup>1</sup> A copy of this Bill with Canning's clauses will be found in *Grattan's Speeches*, iv. 337-351.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, iv. 331, 336.

Catholic opinion ran strongly against Milner, but the Irish bishops supported him, and O'Connell carried resolutions in his favour through great lay assemblies in Dublin. In the following year the Catholic Board, at the suggestion of O'Connell, called upon Grattan to place himself under their direction, and upon his refusal took their petition out of his hands, and entrusted it to Sir Henry Parnell.

It was touching to see the old statesman thus superseded in the cause he had served so long, yet rising in the House without one word of complaint, of recrimination, or of bitterness, to support his younger colleague. The more moderate party still made him their representative, and nothing in his whole career is more admirable than the good taste and the self-abnegation which he manifested throughout. Of very few public men, indeed, can it be so truly said that during a long career they were so little influenced by any personal feeling—ambition, self-interest, resentment, the love of popularity, or the fear of obloquy. A spirit was now arising in Ireland with which he had no sympathy, and the ill feeling was at one time so strong that, after his election for Dublin in 1818, he was assaulted by a mob in the streets. All parties were heartily ashamed of the act, and the Roman Catholics and the Orangemen reciprocally charged each other with the guilt.<sup>1</sup> Notwithstanding this ebullition, there can be little doubt that he rose higher and higher in the estimation of the educated of all parties, and that the moderation and tact he manifested under much provocation exercised a powerful influence upon Parliament. Lord Stanhope has noticed, on the authority of Sir R. Peel, a curious

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<sup>1</sup> Grattan himself, when asked by some English friends about the cause of the riot, answered: 'It was religion — it was religion — and religion broke my head.'

indication of the veneration with which Grattan was at this time regarded. The members who had sat with him in the Irish House of Commons were accustomed in the English House always to address him with a 'Sir,' as they would the Speaker, and this custom was followed by Lord Castlereagh at a time when he was leader of the House.<sup>1</sup>

Grattan moved much during his later years in the best English society and especially in the great Whig houses, and the impression he made seems to have been uniformly favourable. There was a peculiar charm in the transparent simplicity of his nature, and in his quaint, brilliant and original talk, while the high quality of his patriotism and the independence and sagacity of his judgment were fully recognised by those who knew him well. Shortly after Grattan's death Sydney Smith, who was a most acute judge of men, described him in a passage of singular beauty. 'Great men hallow a whole people and lift up all who live in their time. What Irishman does not feel proud that he has lived in the days of Grattan? Who has not turned to him for comfort, from the false friends and open enemies of Ireland? Who did not remember him in the days of its burnings and wastings and murders? No government ever dismayed him. The world could not bribe him. He thought only of Ireland; lived for no other object; dedicated to her his beautiful fancy, his elegant wit, his manly courage and all the splendour of his astonishing eloquence. He was so born and so gifted that poetry, forensic skill, elegant literature and all the highest attainments of human genius were within his reach; but he thought the noblest occupation of a man was to make other men happy and free; and in

<sup>1</sup> Lord Stanhope's *History of England*, vii. 162 (cabinet ed.).

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that straight line he went on for fifty years without one side look, without one yielding thought, without one motive in his heart which he might not have laid open to the view of God and man.'<sup>1</sup>

To the Catholic question Grattan devoted almost the entire energies of his later years. His speeches on English questions were few and far between, and there is only one which can be said to have had great importance. It was delivered in 1815, when Napoleon had returned from Elba, and when the greater portion of the Whig party, including Grey, Whitbread, Romilly and Lord John Cavendish, supported amendments condemning any war undertaken for the purpose of proscribing the actual ruler of France. These were the politicians with whom Grattan usually acted, but on this occasion he, with Plunket and Lord Grenville, promptly seceded from them, and supported the Government in maintaining the necessity of immediate war with Napoleon. His speech on this occasion was one of his most brilliant efforts and may compare with his speeches in the Irish Parliament. In 1817 he had the pleasure of seeing the measure granting military and naval commissions to the Catholics, which ten years before had wrecked the ministry of Lord Grenville, introduced as a ministerial measure and carried without opposition; in 1819 his own motion for a committee to inquire into the Catholic disabilities was defeated by a majority of only two. In this year he made his last speech in Parliament on a motion for the repeal of the Window Tax in Ireland.

It is especially interesting from a passage relating to the part he had played in the Union struggle. 'With respect,' he said, 'to the subject of the Union that has

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<sup>1</sup> Sydney Smith's *Works*, ii. 166-167.



been alluded to, I shall only say that my sentiments remain unchanged, and my old opinions upon the nature of the relationship between the countries have undergone no alteration. The marriage, however, having taken place, it is now the duty, as it ought to be the inclination, of every individual to render it as fruitful, as profitable and as advantageous as possible.'

In 1820 he insisted, contrary to the advice of his physician, in going over to London, to bring the Catholic question forward again, when the illness under which he had for some time been labouring assumed a more violent and deadly character. He lingered for a few days, retaining to the last his full consciousness and interest in public affairs. Those who gathered around his death-bed observed with emotion how fondly and how constantly his mind reverted to that Legislature which he had served so faithfully, and had loved so well. It seemed as though the forms of its guiding spirits rose more vividly on his mind as the hour approached when he was to join them in another world; and, among the last words he is recorded to have uttered, we find a warm and touching eulogium of his great rival, Flood, and many glowing recollections of his fellow-labourers in Ireland. It is remarkable, too, that he spoke with special kindness of Castlereagh, and made it a dying request to his son to abstain from attacking him in Parliament. 'The Union,' he said, 'has passed. The business between him and me is over, and it is for the interests of Ireland that Castlereagh should be minister.' He passed away tranquilly and happily on June 6, 1820. He died, as a patriot might wish to die, crowned with honours and with years, with the love of friends and the admiration of opponents, leaving a nation to deplore his loss, and not an enemy to obscure his fame.

It is at the tombs of great men that succeeding generations kindle the lamp of patriotism; and it might have been supposed that he whose life was fraught with so many weighty lessons, and whose memory possesses so deep a charm, would have rested at last in his own land and among his own people. Another and, as it would seem to some, a nobler lot was reserved for Grattan.

A request was made to his friends that his remains might rest in Westminster Abbey, and that request was complied with. He lies near the tombs of Pitt and Fox. The place is an honourable one, but it was the only honour that was bestowed on him. Not a bust, not an epitaph marks the spot where the greatest of Irish orators sleeps; but one stately form seems to bend in triumph over that unnoticed grave. It is the statue of Castlereagh, 'the statesman of the Legislative Union.'

END OF VOLUME I





